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cover contributed by:
MARC SILVESTRI
art
JRM
colors

UP FRONT

If I can find it, there'll be an old candid shot accompanying this editorial of **Bill Stout** — back when he was Bil — that I snapped in 1971 at the San Diego comics convention. (Yes, the selfsame legendary con that **Steve Leialoha** mentions in COMICS INTERVIEW #10.)

We were fans back then — all aspiring to somehow crack the seemingly secret code and become full-time comics professionals.

Steve and I kept passing like ships in the night — actually, more like bearded, bare-foot longhairs — and a year or two later, in my first editorial position, I made a point of sending him some illustration work.

Bill, even back then, was cool. He looked cool, dressed cool — and his paintings were *definitely* cool. Alas, our paths never again crossed in comics. Over the years, he went his way and I went mine.

That's why the stout **Stout** interview we're serializing was as enlightening for me as I'm sure it will prove for those of you who are not already well aware of his work and staunch fans of **Stout.**

It's a pleasure to cross paths again with Bill at long last and see that we have both fulfilled some of the promise that we saw in each other so many years ago.

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"I started to drop close to 30 bucks a week on comics."

Characters from the PUNISHER motion picture: Castle (Lundgren), Moretti & Franco.

Although the PUNISHER movie has been completed for some time now, things remain very much up in the air as to when or even if the film will ever hit America's big screen. Rumor has it that the movie has already been released in England and that it may soon show up here on videotape!

But those are only rumors. The facts? Well, they're a bit hazy.

New World Pictures — which made the film — has been sold to the same company that owns Marvel Comics. But that company — the Andrews Group —will "probably" be selling off its motion picture properties. So, until a sale is made, THE PUNISHER appears to be trapped in corporate limbo.

THE PUNISHER wasn't completely trouble-free during production, either. Screenwriter Boaz Yakin's efforts to keep

BOAZ YAKIN

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"I heard that New World acquired the rights to all

BERKOWITZ & SAM

the movie true to his vision of the comic book ended in frustration. Concerned that he might appear bitter, Boaz wasn't sure that he should be talking about all of this. Snoopy journalist that I am, though, I kept poking at the wounds . . .

JOHN LUSTIG: *How much of a comics fan are you?*

BOAZ YAKIN: Very much of one — until about two months ago. *(Laughter.)* I was reading so many comics. When I started making money, one of the things I figured I could do was now buy all of the comics I wanted to buy, whereas when I was a kid I had to pick up only the ones I *really* wanted. What started to happen, I guess over the last two years, was I started to drop close to 30 bucks a week on comics. Now, it's *not* the money, but when you drop 30 bucks a week on comics, that means you've got a *big* stack to get through that week. And I was not reading anything else! I just ODed.

I was very very heavily into comics. I mean, I felt that comics sort of hit a peak about when ELEKTRA *and* DARK KNIGHT *and* WATCHMEN *and* BATMAN: YEAR ONE all came out, it was such a great summer for comics, but it's sort of gone downhill since then. That was really a high point. So eventually I realized that a lot of what I was reading was stuff that I really didn't need to be reading.

JOHN: *I know what you mean. When I was growing up I think there were eight Marvel titles, you bought those and it was no sweat following everything — but you get used to buying everything that you think might be of interest.*

BOAZ: Yeah, and I got lost in it. In a few months I'll be able to walk back into a comics shop, but it's like an alcoholic walking back into a bar, you know. I'll be able to walk in and just pick out two or three things that are good, whereas *now* if I walked in, all of this stuff just *jumps* off the wall and into my face and I have to run out in a cold sweat without buying anything. I have kept up on LONE WOLF AND CUB; I really love that.

JOHN: *What attracted you to THE PUNISHER as a movie concept?*

BOAZ: Well, it's interesting because the way I actually got into this whole thing, into the whole movie business, was that I grew up telling stories to my little brother. That's what we did all of the time, I'd tell him stories, and we loved comics and so forth. When I was sixteen or seventeen one of the last stories I told him was something called "The Punisher," which was *very* loosely based on Marvel's Punisher. I *called* it that, but it was about this Vietnam vet who had a kid, an adopted Vietnamese daughter, and how he ended up fighting all of his old friends from Vietnam and all this — it was a terrific story.

Anyway, in a film class at NYU we had an assignment to write a ten-page screenplay, and I wrote this thing up — I kind of went crazy and ended up with 110

VITAL STATISTICS

Name: Boaz Yakin.
Born: 20 June 1965 — New York City.
Occupation: Screenwriter, four years.
Credits: When I was a sophomore at NYU I sold a screenplay that never got made, but it got me into the business. I've done four development deals out here, two for Stallone, that never got set up. The first thing that ever got made is THE PUNISHER. I've got a couple of things happening right now; one at Paramount, a humanitarian thriller called AFRIKAANER; and another at Warner Bros. that will probably be made in January starring Charlie Sheen and possibly Clint Eastwood, that's called THE ROOKIE.
Favorite Comics: That's a tricky one. I guess I'd have to say LONE WOLF AND CUB.
Favorite Films: THE ADVENTURES OF ROBIN HOOD; ONCE UPON A TIME IN THE WEST; STRAW DOGS; a kind of obscure Kurosawa film called DODES'KA-DEN; and VERTIGO.

Marvel characters — I called them up on Punisher."

pages. *(Laughter.)* Of course, I realized that it *wasn't* THE PUNISHER, so I ended up calling it THE DEAD SOLDIER. It had nothing in common with Marvel's Punisher except they were both Vietnam vets, it was much more like RAMBO. And I *sold* it! It never got made, but it's funny because my association with THE PUNISHER goes all the way back to then. And I've always liked the character. I mean, I had met with Guber-Peters to do the BATMAN movie, but I guess I was not big enough to be considered back then — this is four years ago. My dream was to do the BATMAN movie, so I took what I thought was the next best thing, THE PUNISHER.

Basically, I *heard* that New World acquired the rights to all of Marvel Comics' characters, and immediately I went, "They've *got* to do the Punisher!" I called them up, had a meeting set up with some guy called **Tony Randel** who isn't there anymore —

JOHN: *Tony Randall as in Felix Unger?*

BOAZ: No, this was actually the guy who ended up directing HELLRAISER II. Anyway, I met with him, it was a *lousy* meeting. He didn't know what the fuck the Punisher was . . . it was just stupid, so I forgot about it. Then my friend — he used to be my friend — **Robert Kamen,** who ended up producing the movie, I met with him in New York and told him I had had this meeting, and he said, "That's interesting, I just got a *producing* deal at New World." So I pitched THE PUNISHER to *him* and he *loved* it, so *he* called up New World and got the movie going, basically. I was in-between two scripts, had about ten days, so I wrote the first draft in ten days, and that's pretty much the story that got put on film. I did a couple of subsequent rewrites, and then he rewrote me.

JOHN: *I've always been curious about how somebody approaches a licensed character like that. I wonder, do you go in and say, "I've got this great idea for a Marvel Comics character, do you think you can get the rights?" That isn't the case, apparently.*

BOAZ: Right, because they already had the rights, so it was a matter of, "Look, you guys have the rights to do this character, it's a great idea for a movie, let me do the screenplay for it."

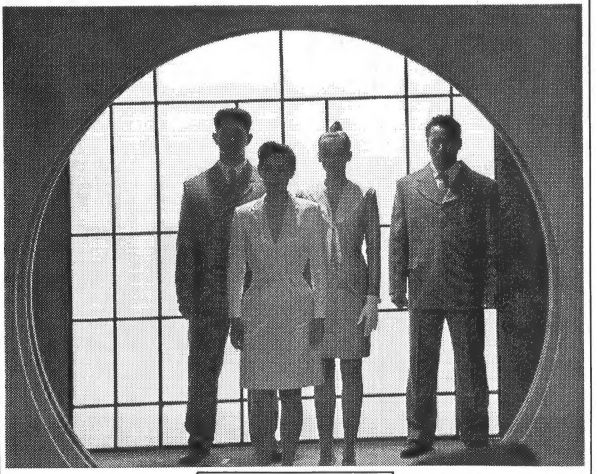
JOHN: *But generally that would be the way to go if —*

BOAZ: Well, the fact is, Warner Bros. owns DC Comics, so the *only* company that's going to make a movie of a DC character is Warners *unless* you specifically go and talk to them to say, "If you're not going to do this, can I get the rights?"

JOHN: *What's your concept of who the Punisher is in his alter ego?*

BOAZ: Well . . . *(Pause.)* That's an interesting question. I really see him as a guy . . . now, obviously he's had to have had some kind of intense childhood; and I think that's something that might be interesting to go into at some point, for the comics guys. But this is a guy who is extremely extremely *directed,* and extremely intense, *naturally.* And he went

Soto, Lady Tanaka, Tanaka's daughter and Tomio.



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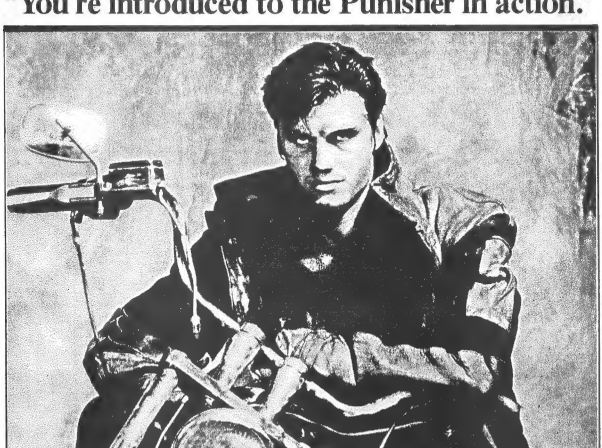
"You're introduced to the Punisher in action."



Frank Castle is . . . The Punisher, or is he Bronson (as in, THEN CAME BRONSON)?!

to Vietnam, ended up being an incredible soldier there, and I think that . . . again, this is the way *I* see him, okay. This is a guy who thinks in a very Catholic way. To me he was the ultimate Catholic avenger — the movie opened with a talk he had with God.

I really see that *he* sees life in terms of blacks and whites. Even as a cop — I had him as a cop before he becomes the Punisher — he sees the world as black and white: "These are the bad guys and these are the people that I have to protect." When his emotional equilibrium was completely blown away, he went crazy — he *really* went crazy — and I think he really sees himself as an embodiment of death. Once in awhile little chips of his armor start coming off and his humanity shows through, and things *manage* to affect him on an emotional level, but this is a guy who has been driven *so* over the edge, his sensitivity has been driven so *far* over the edge, that he's become almost like a machine.

JOHN: *How much of the chinks in the armor do you see in your script?*

BOAZ: There are about four or five places that his humanity sort of comes out. When he hears that fifteen kids have been kidnapped and are being held for ransom, you can just *sense* that no matter what, he's going to have to go rescue these kids. Because of what happened to *his* kids, he's got a real thing about kids. And you actually do see moments of affection for another character. But they are very few, so when they do come out there are very clear.

JOHN: *Well, can you describe your script without giving away too much of what happens?*

BOAZ: Well, basically — let me think for a second . . . it's pretty simple. It got changed along the way, and changed back again, but it just started out with the Punisher — you're kind of introduced to the Punisher in action. Remember that guy **Don Gotti** in New York, they called him the Dapper Don?

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"He's the same character as he is in the comics."

Promotion piece for the comic.

JOHN: *I guess I missed that one.*

BOAZ: There was this guy called Dapper Don or something; he had pretty much gotten off scot-free while a lot of his associates had been nailed by the FBI or whatever. I was inspired by that. THE PUNISHER opens with this guy getting out of court, laughing at everybody, going home and getting wiped out by the Punisher — the idea being to introduce the Punisher as a *fait accompli*. He's been going for five years, nobody knows who he is. And the plot of the movie is basically how the Mafia gets into a war with the Yakuza, so it's pretty much the Punisher in the middle of this huge gang war. And he ends up having to work side by side with the man who actually was responsible for killing his family. I don't kow exactly how much of that has remained in the script, but that's the plot of the movie, basically.

JOHN: *It sounds like a real action-packed film.*

BOAZ: Yeah. As a matter of fact, after reading all of that stuff in COMICS INTERVIEW, basically being *pasted* by these guys

JOHN: *I don't think that was in COMICS INTERVIEW.*

BOAZ: COMICS SCENE. I had to go back — mean, I haven't read my script in a year – so I had to go back and see. "Maybe they're fucking right, maybe it did suck and it was awful and it was so bloody and horrifying and just was the worst." Sometimes you lose perspective on your work, you know. So I went back and read it, and what can I say, it's a little too violent. I mean, it *definitely* needed to be toned down on the violence, but I don't mean gore violence, I just mean nonstop action violence. So, it *was* more violent, but the characters were much more well defined and clear . . . What was the question again? *(Laughter.)*

JOHN: *I think I just commented that there would be a lot of action.*

BOAZ: Oh, yes. My draft was a little too violent. That's sort of got watered down a bit, but it's pretty much a nonstop action film

JOHN: *Any time a property — comic books in particular, it seems like — is adapted to the screen, there are changes that have to be made. What kind of changes did you feel like you needed to make?*

BOAZ: Well, he's pretty much *exactly* the character that he is in the comics, with a few *itsy* differences, okay. And I'm going back to when **Frank Miller** wrote him in that DAREDEVIL series The way the Punisher has been presented now in his own comics – and I'm friends with **Carl Potts** and so on is a bit different. He's much more a hip kind of guy. I'm going back to that sort of *pure* conception of the character.

Let me go back, this is going to sound all discombobulated. He's the same character as he is in the comics, with the changes being that instead of keeping a war journal I gave him this sort of . . . the screen goes black and you just hear his voice, he's either talking to God or to some unknown source. The *idea* of the war journal is there, except he doesn't describe it as a war journal, he just talks — so there's a narration.

And instead of just making him just another Vietnam vet — which I felt we had seen a lot of times — I also gave him the background of being a cop *after* he had gotten back from Vietnam. He came back from Vietnam, became a cop for several years, and in that way had gotten embroiled with the Mafia -- or that's what you can *assume*, you know. And in the comics this guy is, like, on a picnic with his wife and kids and they *accidentally* get killed, whereas for the film it wasn't just this accident, and it ties into the story. He had disturbed some Mafia guy who took it out on his family, and that is what sent him over the edge. But otherwise it's very similar. Oh, and he lives in the sewers.

JOHN: *Why did you have the Punisher living in the sewers?*

BOAZ: Because I felt it was an interesting way to get around the city without ever being caught, and I just felt it was more visual and interesting than to have him in a warehouse in New Jersey, you know. It made the character a little darker and more intense than he was even in the comics.

JOHN: *Dolph Lundgren, of course, plays the Punisher — but Lou Gossett, Jr. plays his partner on the police force?*

BOAZ: Yeah, Jake Berkowitz. *(Laugh-*

"I have heard that it's okay and that the action

Above/left: pencils by Zeck (finished inks by Beatty on the right). Below: Art by Erik Larsen. Next page/above: Zeck and Beatty again. Below: "Blam, baby!!!"

ter.) I originally wrote him as a Jewish guy, so they cast **Lou Gossett** and they're keeping the name.

JOHN: *And he ends up having to go after his former partner, is that what happens?*

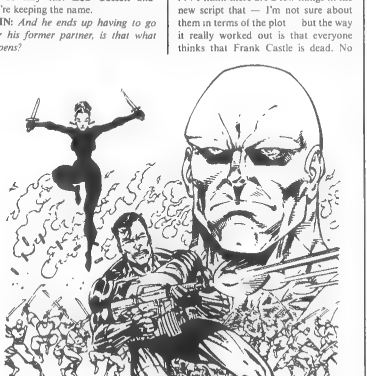
BOAZ: Well, it's sort of the way it works . . . I think there are a few things in the new script that — I'm not sure about them in terms of the plot but the way it really worked out is that everyone thinks that Frank Castle is dead. No one really knows who the Punisher is, except Jake Berkowitz is *pretty* sure that it's his old partner, and it's sort of a parallel storyline. While the Punisher is going around wreaking all of this havok, the cops are on his trail, and Burkowitz is the guy heading that investigation.

JOHN: *There seems to be a fair amount of confusion about the status of the movie right now. Could you fill us in on things?*

BOAZ: Basically, what *I* know — and this is definitely not someone who knows that much is New World had a whole bunch of movies that they had produced, but then something happened to the company, I don't know, and they lost their distribution branch. And the company is in flux right now, and a whole bunch of the films they did are just in limbo. I guess THE PUNISHER is going to be in limbo unless the company gets sold, or some other company picks up the rights to THE PUNISHER But don't quote me on this stuff because I really don't know the status of the movie. I don't want to give anyone any ideas that are wrong; this is just what I've heard.

JOHN: *Do you have any feelings about what we're going to see on the screen? Is it going to be something that we're going to like?*

BOAZ: I have no idea. I've heard mixed things from people who *have* seen it, but they've recut the film. I have heard that it's okay and that the action stuff is pretty good, that it's a pretty decent action film — from people who have



stuff is pretty good — pretty decent action film."

seen it that are in the *film* industry, as opposed to the comics industry. So, I don't know. I hope it's good.

JOHN: *Well . . . well, we might as well jump into it, there was a parting of the ways between you and the producer, Robert Kamen*

BOAZ: Yeah, there was.

JOHN: *He was quoted as saying, "The writer was one of those guys who is adamant about keeping the movie true to the comic" And then later on he said, despite that, that the movie is the essence of the comic book. Do you want to respond to that?*

BOAZ: Well, it wasn't *exactly* that. The way I had structured the movie, okay, you didn't know what had happened to the Punisher until about the end of the second act. It was sort of like that ONCE UPON A TIME IN THE WEST structure where you're introduced to this mysterious character; he's doing all of these things and you're asking why, but you had little tiny bits of flashbacks that kept you strung along, and then at the end of the second act you got hit, *boom*, with this huge flashback of what had happened, and that's what kicked you into the third act.

New World was very uncomfortable with the fact of having, I don't know, such an unlikeable or unpleasant lead character without *explaining* his motivation up front. You know, all of the people there came from television; they think in very obvious ways. They were very uncomfortable with having a psycho running around without the people in the audience knowing why he's a psycho.

I was *very* against putting in a sequence at the very *beginning* of the film that showed what happened to his wife and kids. They wanted to put in an opening sequence and *then* do the rest of the story, and I thought it would just turn it into much more of an uninteresting exploitation film, take the mystery out of it. That was really the big fight. I ended up putting in an opening sequence, but did it quite unwillingly.

and I guess they detected my lack of enthusiasm. That was part of it.

As far as being true to the comics . . . I mean, they kept on wanting to water down the Punisher's character in ways that just *weren't* right. You know, if you're going to have a character going out there and killing people and being as crazy as he is even in the movie still, it just seems to me to be a bit morally wrong to try to balance that with certain things that show him to be nicer or . . . it's hard to explain, but basically they took out the edge in his personality.

JOHN: *So he's not as much of a psycho now?*

BOAZ: No, he's a psycho, he *acts* like a psycho. But . . . I don't know. He comes off as much as a psycho but he's more vague this is *my* opinion, and anyone is free to disagree. Boy, I hope this interview doesn't come off as me being bitter or anything, because I'm not so bitter - or like me trying to rectify things that have been done; that's not the point. But you're asking me, so I'm telling you. *(Laughter.)*

JOHN: *Well, you know the press, we sensationalize like crazy*

BOAZ: Yeah Well, just as long as it's just me talking. Just silly little things, like I had a little cameo by Matt Murdock that was taken out. And there's a character in the movie, the Punisher's only friend, this old bum called Shake who is sort of based on the Crawley character that **Doug Moench** created in those MOON KNIGHT comics — but Shake actually spoke in iambic pentameter all of the time. *(Laughter.)* That's been somewhat changed. He was actually quite funny, but I don't know how he's going to be in this film.

He's sort of the Punisher's only friend and informant and etc., and the first time you see him he's thrown out of a bar, hears someone whispering his name, and walks into an alley and a noose wraps around his leg and sweeps him upside down, and the Punisher gives him some shit while he's hanging there, because the Punisher's pissed it's kind of a comical scene. It doesn't sound like much, but this was regarded by everybody as unnecessary cruelty by the Punisher. This is a man who kills people every day, right! So that's been changed so it has no edge behind it, it's much more out of character and more gimmicky and silly. I think a lot of that has happened to this script.

JOHN: *Well, as far as you coming off as bitter or something like that, I gather*

"I think the BATM[illegible]ovie is much truer to the spirit

WRITA
WHEN THE MAN'S DONE, I HOPE I GET A PIECE OF 'IM
GONNA BE A LOT OF PIECES WHEN THE MAN'S DONE!
THE SMELL OF BLOOD IS BRING-ING OUT THE ANIMALS. THEY WANT A SHOW.
I'LL GIVE THEM A SHOW.
JIGSAW.

there has probably never been a screenwriter who has been totally satisfied with the finished product, you know.

BOAZ: Well, in the case of THE PUNISHER I was also lied to a lot, which didn't help. And I really resent the fact that, you know . . . for instance, whe whole thing about being true to the character, I really had to fight for the skull staying on the shirt. I really fought for that. In my original draft the Punisher was not wearing the tights with the white boots and white gloves, he was wearing a leather outfit with all sorts of combat gear, and he had a T-shirt with a skull on it. You can *buy* these things. The big argument by the producer was, "When would he have time to make this costume with a skull on it?" *(Laughter.)* So the only time you see the skull now is on these knives he has, as an ornament on the hilt. To me it would seem to take a lot more time to sculpt skulls out of copper, or mold them and put them on the backs of knives, than to spray paint a T-shirt with a skull, you know.

In the end what I actually did was I got rid of the skull for the whole script and just at the very last scene, when the Punisher was going in to take on all these Yakuza, had him spray paint a kevlar vest with a skull, sort of symbolically — just so it was there *once*. And it sort of made sense because he's going on this big suicide mission. And I actually talked to the producer in Australia as they were about to shoot, and I said, "Please please please, keep the skull in the last scene, just for the fans and for the character." And he was thinking about it, but finally the answer was no.

JOHN: *Did he say why?*

BOAZ: Yeah, he felt it was too comic-bookey. My problem with that is that it's not *that* comic-bookey first of all, and second of all you're doing a comic-book character. You know what it really is, John? Some people, when they're doing something . . . The way I look at it, if I'm going to be doing an original screenplay, great. If I'm going to be adapting a character, my goal as an artist is to present the spirit of that character as validly and as truthfully as I can without getting my *own* ego in the way. My ego will be gratified by the fact that what I've done is as good as it can be, okay. A lot of people out here feel the need to put their own *stamp* on something in a way that interferes with the . . . what's the word I'm looking for?

JOHN: *"Spirit?"*

BOAZ: Not just the spirit but the *integrity* of the character. Look, as much as they respected Batman in the BATMAN movie, casting **Michael Keaton,** however well he acted — 'cause his acting was fine — was **Tim Burton** not being able to deal with Batman and injecting what *he* felt *he* had to inject into it. That wasn't true to the spirit of Batman. **Tim Burton** did not see himself as the guy who spent his whole life making muscles for himself, and **Tim Burton** could identify with **Michael Keaton** and put **Michael Keaton** in the film. Now, having said that, I think the BATMAN movie is much truer to the spirit of the comics than THE PUNISHER is going to be. Anyway, I'm not used to doing these things, I'm going off on a million different subjects. *(Laughter.)*

JOHN: *That's okay, don't worry about it.*

BOAZ: In this case what it was was an example of someone who had agreed to do something and then found his own ego too big to be able to put it at the service of the subject matter, you know what I mean. I mean, look, the movie is still going to be the Punisher, he's still going to be the Punisher, it's not like it's *totally* different. But a lot of the things that *make* the Punisher what it is are going to be gone.

JOHN: *It kind of does come down to the question of: In doing a comic-book character, if you remove some of the things that make the character work in the comic book, are you still doing that*

of the comics than THE PUNISHER is going to be."

character?

BOAZ: It's not that it's not the same character, it's that . . . It's like, fuck man, you're going to pay six bucks to see the Punisher. You know, if you're going to bother making a movie called THE PUNISHER, make it the fucking Punisher. I saw COBRA already, I saw RAMBO already. If you're going to make THE PUNISHER, why not make it the Punisher? What's the point?

JOHN: *Right, because otherwise you're doing DEATH WISH.*

BOAZ: Yeah. And you know, now I'll bet they regret it. When you see the licensing that BATMAN did on that bat, and when you think of how much easier it would have been to promote THE PUNISHER with the visual image that people could key into — not that it would have been half as big as BATMAN, but it would have been *something* — and they don't have it. What are you going to do? They didn't feel that it needed it. They felt uncomfortable with the fact that on a certain basic level they were making a comic book.

JOHN: *The Punisher is very popular in the comics right now. What do you think it is about the character that appeals to people?*

BOAZ: Well, it's the Wolverine/Batman/Punisher type of thing — something has happened in the '80s, you know. The world increasingly stops feeling like the kind of place that you can really do anything about. Daredevil and Spider-Man and Thor and all of those characters back in the '60s were so popular because they were riding on this wave of "we can do things, we can be socially responsible." And the '70s kind of went . . . there was no real point of view in the '70s.

Whereas *now* there's this real feeling of impotence — you just feel impotent — and in a kind of nihilistic, impotent sort of way, the Punisher and Wolverine and Batman are very attractive characters. They will never really win, but at least they'll get to fuck up as many bad guys as they can along the way.

JOHN: *They're lashing out?*

BOAZ: Yes, they're lashing out. And I think what's interesting about them is that it *is* a very impotent lashing out.

JOHN: *It struck me as you were talking that these heroes are working outside of the system because the system doesn't work, and they're having to lash out and be more violent because of that.*

BOAZ: Yeah, I agree with that completely. What's sort of starting to happen is that — and I'm as responsible for this as anyone else — but the lashing out becomes more important than even the reasons or the results.

JOHN: *I find that a little scary.*

BOAZ: When I read the PUNISHER comics — and I've talked about this with Carl — they have this weapons page at the end of WAR JOURNAL, and I'm like, "Man, what is *that* for?" *(Laughter.)*

JOHN: *You mean you don't view the Punisher as someone the kids should emulate and grow up to be?*

BOAZ: Yeah. *(Laughter.)* Yeah, right. A lot of times the problem . . . as an artist a lot of times you're taking out things that are bothering you on paper, you're sort of working out a catharsis for yourself, but you don't go and do it in real life. But what ends up happening, and you're not really thinking about it, is that all of these kids are going to start reading it and getting all of these weird ideas. You don't want that. Your responsibility is to *express* yourself as well and as truthfully as you can, and the responsibility of the audience you want to leave to them — as a creative person you want just really to create the things you feel.

JOHN: *And it's difficult. You want to be socially responsible, whatever that means, but at the same time there's nothing you can do that* somebody *isn't going to take wrong. Somebody's going to take it wrong no matter what.*

BOAZ: But then there's things . . . I mean, as much as I feel you should be able to do whatever you want — like, I

"I hope I haven't come off too negatively."

broke out in a cold sweat during that scene in the BATMAN movie when they fucked up all of the art. I'm grateful that it wasn't done as well as it could have been. I felt it was rather poorly staged, so that any amount of excitement it had was diminished, but when I saw that — mean, I was in New York a couple of weeks before and all of this "wilding" shit was going on — I just kind of went, "Oh, some kids are going to get some fucking bad ideas watching this." You know, if one **Rembrandt** even gets scratched, the whole movie wasn't worth it.

But you can't hold yourself back from creating in a way that you believe in just because you're afraid somebody is going to take it wrong. Then you would be limiting art, which is wrong.

JOHN: *All you can do is to just try to be responsible within the boundaries of whatever you're working on.*

BOAZ: It's an endless discussion.

JOHN: *Anything you want to add about the film?*

BOAZ: Again, I do hope it's good. And I hope I haven't come off too negatively

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"It's a source of frustration for me, trying

MARC SILVESTRI

I first met Marc Silvestri at the San Diego Comic Convention in August 1989. I found him to be a very warm and pleasant person who really enjoys life and doesn't take himself too seriously.

He does, however, enjoy his work with Chris Claremont on the X-MEN and, judging by the amount of pencil work I've just seen on the latest issue of X-MEN, I can only say his work just keeps getting better with each outing. Being at the beach in Malibu, California, and having Cynthia Sullivan at his side can only make for a happy environment to work in . . . and after playing on the beach we sat down with beer and wine and a good sense of the absurd to conduct the following comics interview . . .

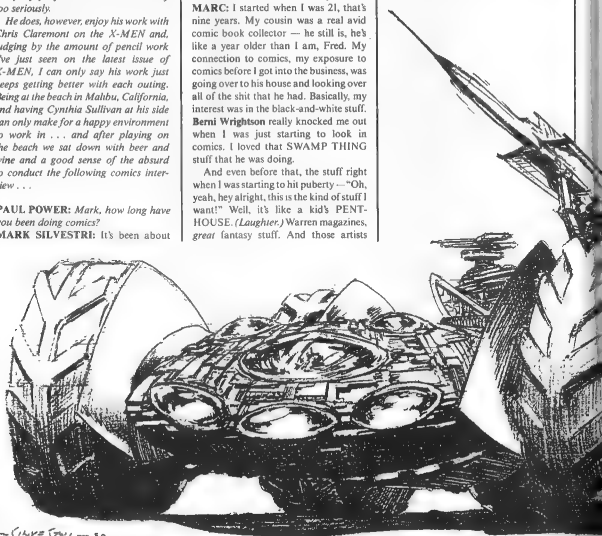
PAUL POWER: *Mark, how long have you been doing comics?*

MARK SILVESTRI: It's been about two years, you know that. *(Laughter.)* I've been in this business for eight years, maybe even close to nine years. How old am I?

CYNTHIA SULLIVAN: Thirty.

MARC: I started when I was 21, that's nine years. My cousin was a real avid comic book collector — he still is, he's like a year older than I am, Fred. My connection to comics, my exposure to comics before I got into the business, was going over to his house and looking over all of the shit that he had. Basically, my interest was in the black-and-white stuff. **Berni Wrightson** really knocked me out when I was just starting to look in comics. I loved that SWAMP THING stuff that he was doing.

And even before that, the stuff right when I was starting to hit puberty — "Oh, yeah, hey alright, this is the kind of stuff I want!" Well, it's like a kid's PENTHOUSE. *(Laughter.)* Warren magazines, *great* fantasy stuff. And those artists really used to knock me out, guys that just, like, couldn't control themselves, just kept drawing and drawing. That stuff really impressed me when I was



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to make up for my lack of drawing ability."

younger

PAUL: *That was classified as pornography in Australia.*

MARC: Well, I classified it like that too; that's why I used to look at that stuff. *(Laughter.)*

CYNTHIA: I'm so surprised. I'm shocked.

MARC: Hey, it's my interview, okay. *(Laughter.)* Yeah -

CYNTHIA: I'll deal with you later.

MARC: I used to go over to Fred's place and look at that stuff, that was my real exposure to comics.

PAUL: *How old were you then?*

MARC: I'd say maybe from like ten.

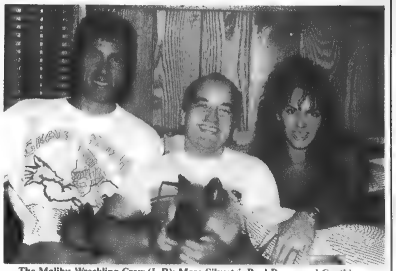
CYNTHIA: *(Laughter.)*

MARC: Through, like, fifteen or sixteen.

PAUL: *You didn't have a collection yourself?*

MARC: No. I had no appreciation for the stories. I would read issue #250 and then wouldn't read it again until issue #280, just because I happened to like who was working on it artwise. I had, like, five comics. I had a *great* **John Buscema**

Photo: Mike Chavez



The Malibu Wrecking Crew (L-R): Marc Silvestri, Paul Power and Cynthia Sullivan (she's taken, boys — Dama!!!). The illustration below is but one of the many graphite-images from Marc's mind.

comic, FANTASTIC FOUR with the Negative Zone, they went after Annihilus and all that stuff. I think **John Buscema** and **Jack Kirby,** like, mixed it up — back then you couldn't tell who did what.

PAUL: *Because Joe Sinnott was inking.*

MARC: But now you look back on that stuff and you go, "Oh, there's a **Buscema** panel, there's a **Kirby** panel," it's pretty easy to determine. I still have those things! No cover and there's things all over the pages, but I still have them — and they *still* knock me out! To this day **Buscema** is one of my biggest influences in comics. He's probably the best artist in comics that there is.

PAUL: *When did you first start drawing?*

MARC: Well, this is kind of funny, and nobody believes me when I say this, but I didn't start drawing seriously until about six months before I started doing comics.

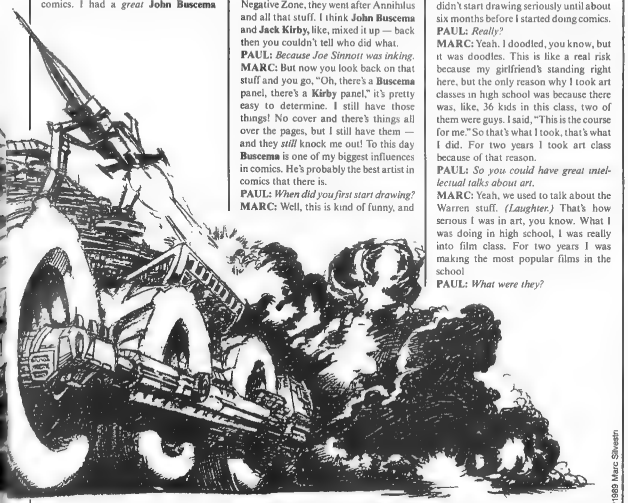
PAUL: *Really?*

MARC: Yeah. I doodled, you know, but it was doodles. This is like a real risk because my girlfriend's standing right here, but the only reason why I took art classes in high school was because there was, like, 36 kids in this class, two of them were guys. I said, "This is the course for me." So that's what I took, that's what I did. For two years I took art class because of that reason.

PAUL: *So you could have great intellectual talks about art.*

MARC: Yeah, we used to talk about the Warren stuff. *(Laughter.)* That's how serious I was in art, you know. What I was doing in high school, I was really into film class. For two years I was making the most popular films in the school

PAUL: *What were they?*



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"The VAMPIRELLA stuff's like a kid's PENTHOUSE."

MARC: Oh, silly action adventure stuff and parody of action/adventure stuff. I used to get all of my friends together, you know. The first year I had no idea what I was doing, not even a script or a plot let alone storyboards or anything like that. But we had a riot; they came out surprisingly good. And that was my real interest, filmmaking.

PAUL: *Well, do you think the filmmaking helped you in storytelling?*

MARC: I think so.

PAUL: *Do you see yourself more as a cinematographer or a director than a cartoonist?*

MARC: Yeah, I actually think in those terms easier than I do in terms of having to put down an idea onto a single panel on paper. It's still a never ending source of frustration for me, trying to make up for my lack of drawing ability when I'm thinking of it in my head that way, whereas a special effects guy could put it on the screen for me if I could tell him and maybe sketch it out roughly.

PAUL: *Well, your drawing is pretty solid How many years did you have of life drawing?*

MARC: *(Laughter.)* Life drawing? You know, it's been funny, but comics has been my education. The comics *business*, not so much learning from comics — learning as I've had to draw. It's like being paid to go to school, really. My formal training was to meet girls in high school, that was about it.

CYNTHIA: And you failed miserably.

MARC: Failed miserably, never got laid. *(Laughter.)* The girls were after the jocks, you know. They weren't after the artistic types

PAUL: *You look athletic; weren't you athletic then?*

MARC: No, not really. I played sports, you know, but I bombed out of just about everything organized. But with my friends I'd go out and play some touch football.

VITAL STATISTICS

Name: Marc Silvestri.
Occupation: Cartoonist.
Born: 29 March 1959.
Artistic Favorites: Mignola, Wrightson, Frazetta, Leialoha, Manara, J. Buscema and a few others.
Favorite Music: The Cure, FYC, Love & Rockets, Morrisey and Scottish bagpipe music and the Australian Aboriginal didgeridoo tribal songs and jazz.
Hobbies: Playing keyboards and sailing and movies. Comics. Weight lifting and killing ants. (It's a long story, folks!)

PAUL: *Did you find that sort of athletic ability helped in the drawing and stuff?*

MARC: Well, it does now because I work out these days, when I can. Being at the gym, guys give me funny looks because I'm looking at *them*, but it's only because I want to see the muscles in movement

CYNTHIA: *(Laughter.)*

MARC: You open up a muscle magazine and it's all posed, there's no use to that.

CYNTHIA: Pardon me, this is not my interview, but some of his characters even kind of resemble Mark in the face.

PAUL: *They do, yeah.*

MARC: Which characters, the evil mutants? *(Laughter.)*

CYNTHIA: I can always see his facial features, because he looks at himself to draw.

Conan the Barbarian — for the record, his first CONAN was #135.

"My stuff sucked but it was my stuff."

PAUL: *That's quite common of cartoonists. Okay, so you started out wanting to be a filmmaker, and then six months before getting into comics you decided to pursue art?*

MARC: No, it's not really that simple. After high school I went to college for a year and wasted my time — believe it or not, I actually had notions of becoming a medical student.

CYNTHIA: *(Laughter.)*

MARC: Yeah, I know, but I did. That's before my brain turned to Purina. I actually did pretty good in what I was doing.

PAUL: *So, what gave you the twist?*

MARC: What caused me to be bent? *(Laughter.)* I worked at a health club for a year and then one day they wanted to ship me out to this other club that was, like, an hour's drive away, and I couldn't take that shit no more. What else could I do with my life? So I did this little stupid drawing on this piece of paper, I thought, "Hey, maybe I could do this for my livelihood. I'll just start drawing!" It seemed like such an easy thing to do.

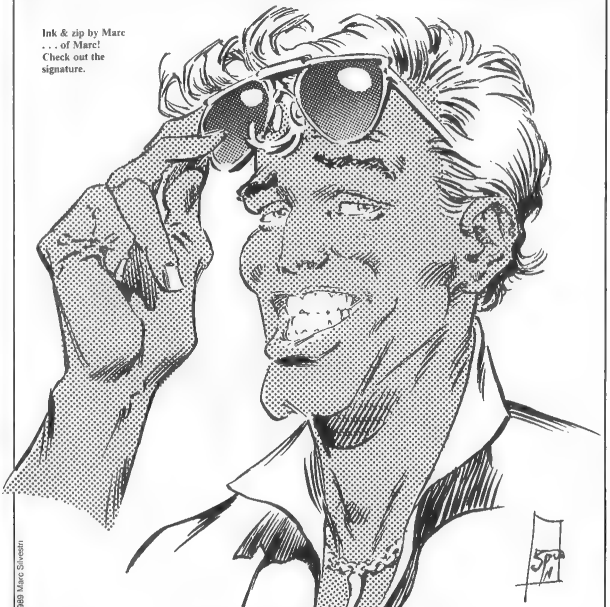
PAUL: *So, drawing was very easy for you.*

MARC: Well, no — I didn't say it was any good. This was a sketch, it seemed like it was easy to do, but it wasn't good. But it just so happened that DC Comics at that time, nine years ago, was running this campaign, this big talent hunt for NEW TALENT SHOWCASE – somewhere in the early '80s. Some kind of gimmick, I didn't know what it was, but it actually turned out to be legitimate. It's one of those things that you see in the back of the comic books and you think, "Yeah, okay, they just want you to buy these books." And my cousin Fred said, "Hey, why don't you do this! You doodle all of this stuff, why don't you do this!"

PAUL: *That's quite common you know.*

MARC: Yeah. It's like you come up to someone who's funny and say, "Hey, why

Ink & zip by Marc . . . of Marc! Check out the signature.



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"Everything's a great idea when you're sauced."

don't you become a stand-up comedian!" Then he goes up there and falls on his face because he's not funny to anybody else. *(Laughter.)*

PAUL: *'Cause you were half bombed at the time.*

MARC: Yeah, everything's a great idea when you're sauced. *(Laughter.)* So, he said, "Why don't you give this a shot, put together a portfolio and show them what you've got."

PAUL: *Who did you see?*

MARC: I have no idea. Okay, **Len Wein** was there. **Joe Orlando,** I think he's the guy that gave me the job.

Oh, backtracking a bit, I just forgot all about this: I *had* done a short comic book when I was in high school. My brother had written a story — it's funny how it just skips my mind, probably because it was such a horrible nightmare in my life. No, what it was, we did a comic that we had thought about getting into the business with — again, a suggestion of my cousin. We sent it to Marvel and we got back a very nice letter saying essentially that it sucked. *(Laughter.)* It was one of those standard letters where they just put your name in there and they say —

PAUL: *"Thank you very much, why don't you become a butcher."*

MARC: Yeah, pretty much — "Don't give up the day job." And that was the end of it, that was the last time that I even thought about doing comics. It was a lark.

PAUL: *So, Fred was really the one who pushed you.*

MARC: Yeah, he was — him and my brother. But, jumping ahead a couple of years again, what I did was I put together a portfolio and I redrew this comic —

PAUL: *What was your first work, was it for NEW TALENT SHOWCASE?*

MARC: No, it was before that. They didn't actually have a showcase for new talent back then unless you want to call HOUSE OF MYSTERY and all that stuff, the anthology books where I was for about a year, like a new talent area. Nobody would see it but you could say you've been published.

So, I redrew four pages of this comic that I had done in high school. It took me, like, four months to do this, 'cause I was so slow and I didn't know what I was doing. I redraw *every* figure twelve times.

PAUL: *Are you that self-conscious?*

MARC: *Very* self-conscious. You wanted to look · *(Sweeping gesture with hand hits dog)* · oops.

PAUL: *Dog foul. (Laughter.)*

MARC: You want it to look just right, you know. It may *suck*, but you think it looks good. So, I redrew this thing, and this was when I really started drawing seriously and thinking about doing comics. And I talked to **Joe Orlando** — I finally cornered him after he had seen, like, 50 other portfolios that day. This was in Chicago at the convention —

PAUL: *What year?*

MARC: Gosh . . . early '80s is all I can remember, like '81 I guess. And so finally — *actually,* my brother *drags* me into his hotel room. At this point I was going, "I wanna go home, I'm so *embarrassed,* my stuff *stinks!" (Laughter.)* So we got up to **Orlando's** hotel room — I felt so sorry for **Orlando,** he just wanted to get a break before dinner and here we are pounding on his door. So, he looks at my portfolio, he looks at the four-page comic that I did I always tell the kids "Do a comic book, just a few pages to show you can do continuity and you can make a phone look like a phone." Just to show basically that you can tell a story in an interesting, cohesive manner — that's what I did.

Orlando's looking at these pages of comic books and he says, "How fast are you? How long does it take you to do this?" I had a basic idea that you had to be faster than a page a month. *(Laughter.)* I wasn't *that* stupid, so I lied — "Well, I do about a page a day." *(Laughter.)* Literally, it took me weeks to do a single page. "I do a page a day." — I

The original pencils for the cover of Marvel's REVENGE OF THE LIVING MONOLITH (with the finished piece). You can read the credits for yourself. The splash page is also present on the previous page (again, in pencil). HamBone Files.

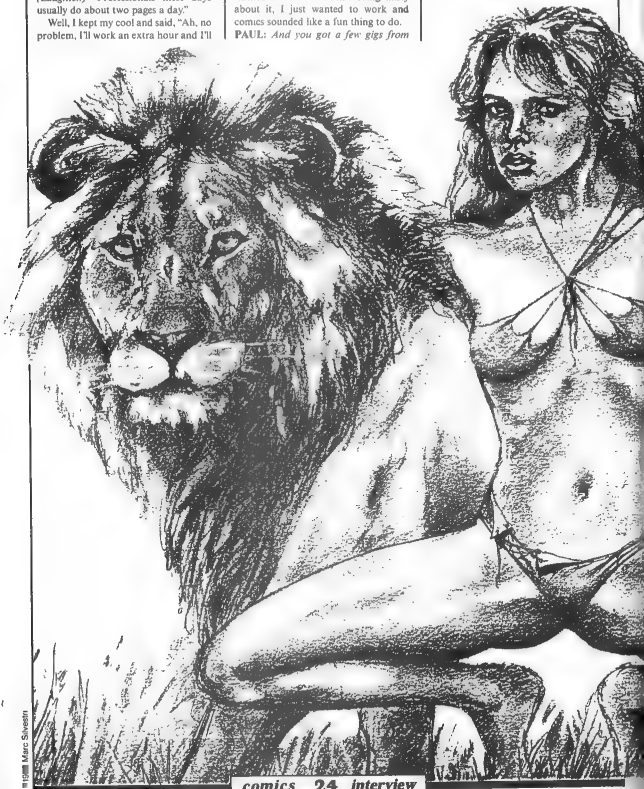
"I was surprised that comics actually paid

was desperate for a job. And he looks at me and goes, "You know, you're going to have to speed this up a little bit." *(Laughter.)* "Professionals these days usually do about two pages a day."

Well, I kept my cool and said, "Ah, no problem, I'll work an extra hour and I'll get an extra page done." I think everybody does that, though. They'll say anything to get a job. I said anything he wanted to hear. I wasn't being nasty about it, I just wanted to work and comics sounded like a fun thing to do.

PAUL: *And you got a few gigs from that?*

MARC: I was with DC Comics for, like, a year doing the anthology titles, little



© Marc Silvestri

that well. It was a real eye-opener to me."

eight-page horror stories and things like that.

PAUL: *Did you ink yourself?*

MARC: No, I had inkers. **Tony DeZuniga** inked something of mine which was probably the best of the bunch.

PAUL: *He's a solid draftsman.*

MARC: Yeah. I mean, it's a real *shock* to somebody getting into the business.

PAUL: *Yeah, 'cause he changes everything.*

MARC: Oh, everything! It looked a lot *better,* of course, but it was kind of *distressing* to me. My stuff sucked but it was my stuff; I wanted it to look like my stuff. But afterwards everybody was coming up to me and saying, "Hey, that looked pretty good." *I* knew it was **DeZuniga,** so I thought, "Hey, maybe this ain't such a bad idea; have somebody *good* inking over me and I get the credit." *(Laughter.)*

So I was with them for, like, a year, and then things just sort of kind of fell apart. I wasn't getting anywhere with them; all they kept offering me was these little stories, and I had to keep calling them for more work. And **Jim Shooter** from Marvel actually, I went up to him at the Chicago convention a year later and showed him what I had, and right there on the spot he said, "Come work for us and I'll double your salary" And the first job for them was CONAN THE BARBARIAN #135, and I've been with them ever since.

PAUL: *Who were some of the people that you've worked with that you've really enjoyed, like inkers and such?*

MARC: You know, it's funny, but only in the past few years have I really been able to say, "I don't want *so-and-so* to be inking my work," and somebody actually listens to me. For the first few years it was like, "Okay, we've got this new inker, who can we throw him on top of? Let's get **Silvestri!"**

PAUL: *It must have been pretty torturous.*

MARC: It was, it was real frustrating. You hand in the stuff and it's out of your control at that point. Like I've been saying, it wasn't that *good* at that point, but still it's your stuff, you want it to look like your stuff.

But now it's great, I can work with people like **Dan Green,** who I respect immensely. There's a lot of people I'd *like* to work with that I haven't worked with. I liked working with **Steve Leialoha;** I think he did a great job. I worked with **Hilary Barta** and he did a great job; I'd like to get more work with him.

PAUL: *Yeah, he has that nice sort of Will Eisner/Jack Cole thing.*

MARC: Yeah, he's a throwback, which we need more of. He's got a real talent with a brush. Like **Leialoha,** he's got a real flair, he really knows what he's doing.

PAUL: *Well, these guys can pick up on the little nuances you put in there, like that little twinkling of an eye.*

MARC: Sure.

PAUL: *Whereas a Vinnie Colletta might zip it and kill it.*

MARC: What did you say? *(Laughter.)* That was **Paul Power.**

PAUL: *Vinnie saves them if somebody's late, you know —*

MARC: Vinnie did a job over one of my things

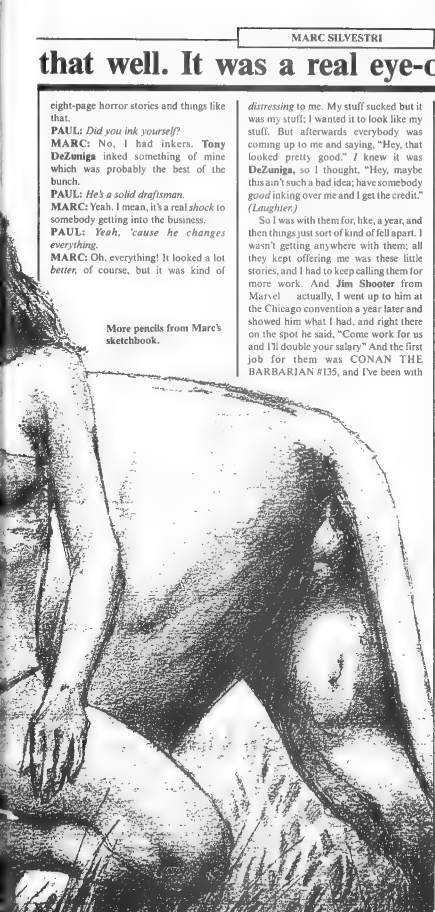
PAUL: *Too bad for you if you're late, Vinnie'll getcha.*

MARC: I didn't say that, either. Nope, that was Paul again. You can't really blame the guy because, like you said, it's usually one of those last minute things But there's a lot of guys that I'd love to work with. I'd like to work with **Klaus Janson;** I think that would be really weird.

PAUL: *He's got a real energy.*

MARC: Yeah, I like that, there's a lot to be admired in that. He's got that fearless inking quality about him that just goes in there like *AIEE!* Samurai Inker!! *I like* that; it's got a lot of power and it would be different. One of these days.

More pencils from Marc's sketchbook.



"I'd like to work with P. Craig Russell."

PAUL: *Who else?*

MARC: I'd like to work with **P. Craig Russell;** that would be kind of interesting. I've always wanted to work with **Mike Mignola.** He almost did something with me, inking me.

PAUL: *I didn't know he inked.*

MARC: Well, I don't think he does, really, like on a regular basis. But I wanted him to do some finishes over some X-MEN stuff, and he *almost* did it. I was disappointed.

PAUL: *I'd like to see Barry Smith ink your stuff.*

MARC: Yeah, that would be interesting.

PAUL: *Joe Sinnott would be interesting, that traditional sort of Marvel brush stuff.*

MARC: Oh, yeah, I wouldn't mind that either. I have a great deal of respect for him.

PAUL: *So, do you follow a lot of other people's work?*

MARC: I work hard; I really don't have the time. Usually, when I get away from that drawing table I just want to get away from comics in general, so I don't really read much.

"Get me the hell out of this business, I can't take it anymore."

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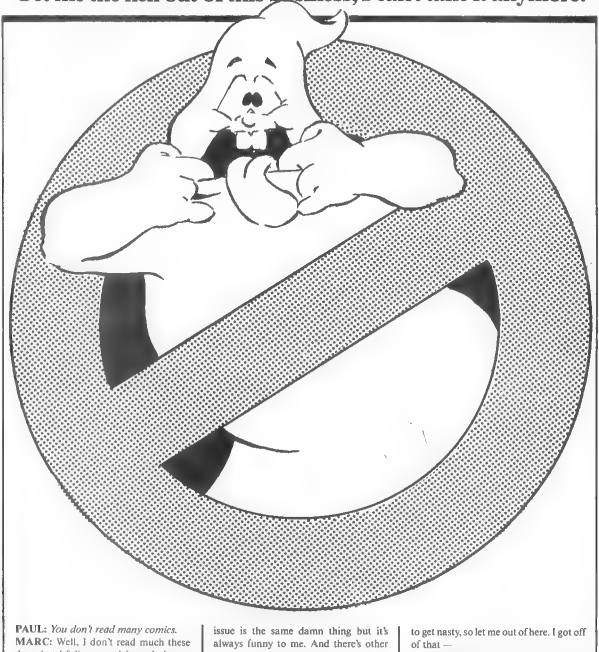

PAUL: *You don't read many comics.*

MARC: Well, I don't read much these days, but I follow people's work; but as far as mainstream comics go it's just a handful of people I enjoy comics but some days it's like, "Get me the hell out of this business. I can't take this anymore." But then there's other days when it really works, it all comes together.

I'll read *anything* that **Hilary Barta** does because he cracks me up. And I think **Mike Mignola** is one of the best in the business. And **Buscema,** of course. And I look at **Moebius'** stuff whenever I get a chance. And I read NEXUS and GROO – I love GROO, that's the longest running joke. *(Laughter.)* Every issue is the same damn thing but it's always funny to me. And there's other things that I read — this stuff always flies out of my head when I most need it, you know. I like film magazines, and I'm a car nut.

PAUL: *So, how did you get on to THE X-MEN?*

MARC: I was about to leave comics.

PAUL: *What were you going to do, illustration or what?*

MARC: I really wasn't sure, it was one of those "I'm fed up and I'm out of here" type of deals. I was doing WEB OF SPIDER-MAN, which was fun when it started but scheduling problems got into a real hassle and the phone calls started to get nasty, so let me out of here. I got off of that —

PAUL: *Did they double up the book on you, fool around with the schedule?*

MARC: No, a lot of it was my fault. That was my first monthly and I really wasn't used to it. I was doing CONAN THE KING before that, but I got real tired of drawing loincloths and broadswords and things like that.

PAUL: *Buscema loves drawing that stuff.*

MARC: He's good at it, though. Well, he's good at anything, really. I haven't seen anything that he *can't* do. But he likes that sort of thing; that's easy work. I was doing that and thinking of getting

"Chris was kind of leery, wasn't too keen on me."

out of comics. Then I split from SPIDER-MAN after doing six issues —

PAUL: *Did you hit burnout or what?*

MARC: I just felt dissatisfied. I wasn't making the money, you know, and I'm not a kid anymore, I had to pay the bills. And I felt I was knocking my head against the wall with that stuff. **Ann Nocenti** offered me a NEW MUTANTS spot, to pick up on that book, and I thought, "Hey, that sounds like a pretty good idea." Actually, no, I'm ahead of myself there

What happened after SPIDER-MAN was I did a mini-series of the Avengers and the X-Men — it was like we had this rash of X-MEN VS SOMEBODY books. I had X-MEN VS. THE AVENGERS written by **Roger Stern** with **Ann Nocenti** as editor, and at the time she was editing the mutant books. She really liked what I was doing on this mini-series, and I was having a good time with it — for the first time in a long time I was having a *good* time doing comics. It didn't really come out all that great; looking back on it now, I don't think it was that great of a job; and eventually the project fell apart, I never did the last one of the mini-series. It conflicted with starting up on the next thing, which I'll get to. But Ann offered me that stint on THE NEW MUTANTS and I said, "I'll take that."

PAUL: *Were the royalties better on those or what?*

MARC: Yeah, oh yeah. It's amazing, all of a sudden I could earn more than a decent living - I was surprised that comics actually paid that well. It was a real eye-opener to me. I was doing the same work that I was doing on SPIDER-MAN, or even the CONAN stuff. The royalties on CONAN THE KING were $600, and that was a bi-monthly book. You couldn't live on that, the page rate plus the royalty. And it was a long book, too. You would be doing the work of two books, because it was, like, 38 pages, and you would be making the royalties of one shitty selling book. So I wanted to get out of that.

So, then I did SPIDER-MAN, got off that, did the mini-series, and Ann offered me NEW MUTANTS, which I took. But at that point **John Romita, Jr.** was leaving THE X-MEN, so it was a question of being in the right place at the right time. Ann said, "I really like what you're doing with the X-Men in this mini-series; do you want to do THE X-MEN?" I had asked her first, because I had heard rumors that he was leaving. "Ann, hey, I'm not doing anything, what about THE X-MEN?" I was being pretty bold at this point.

PAUL: *Well, sure, that's a sweet deal.*

MARC: A *real* sweet deal. I was, like, fifteen in line. *(Laughter.)*

PAUL: *It's a great incentive to do better work.*

MARC: Yeah, but I didn't even know until ten months later when I got my first royalty check.

PAUL: *Did you call them up and say, "Is this a mistake?" (Laughter.)*

MARC: Hell, I ain't stupid. I said, "Well, if the next one's two bucks I'll know the first one was a mistake, so I'll keep my mouth shut." *(Laughter.)* But yeah, she offered me THE X-MEN after she saw what I was doing on the mini-series. And I think Chris was kind of leery, wasn't too keen on me.

PAUL: *Oh, what does Chris know, he's just a writer. (Laughter.)*

MARC: Chris just pays my rent, Paul. He was kind of leery because I was pretty much unproven, and THE X-MEN is really a high profile book. He had wanted **Alan Davis** to do it; he always worked well with **Alan Davis** — and consequently they're working together now on a real nice book called EXCALIBUR. For some reason Alan didn't want to do X-MEN, and somebody didn't want to work with somebody else. **Barry Smith** was up for it . . . you know, you keep hearing conflicting stories . . .

I just got lucky. Ann just happened to like what I was doing, so I think she sold me to Chris — so I have Ann to thank for still being in the business today. And she was great to work with. She put up with a lot of shit that I was going through at the time, cut me a lot of slack, and I

INFERNO
PART THE FOURTH
JEAN GABY.
MADELYNE PRYOR.
FLIP SIDE OF THE SAME COIN, THOSE INTO WHOM SHE'D PUT THE FINAL WORKING... ONE THE ORISHI-
-NAL-
THE OTHER, A CUSP-FORCE-GROWN TO ADULTHOOD FROM A CLUTCH OF STOLEN CELLS.
EARLIER TONIGHT, A DEMONIC SAUD-CHRISTIAN HADN'T BIN ENOUGH FOR THE BOSS OF THEM.
HE WAS RIGHT.

"It's been a circus since the book has gone to 15 issues a year."

appreciate it. And after all that, Chris and I work together pretty well.

PAUL: *In working with Chris, does he call you, do you get the script first, how do you work on that?*

MARC: It's been a real circus since the book has gone to fifteen issues a year. We don't talk nearly as much as I would like to, mostly because I hate talking on the phone. For some reason I just can't be creative while I'm talking to someone on the phone. And I like to feel more that I'm contributing instead of just being a sounding board for ideas being thrown at me.

But, you know, we talk. Chris says what he's thinking of, where he'd like to go with the characters. And Chris is real open to suggestions, he really is. I was kind of surprised with that, I thought he'd be like a "I'm in control, this is *my* book, you draw what I tell you" type – this was before I really knew him. He's real open to suggestions. I don't know if it's because he's got so much to do these days and he doesn't have time to hammer out the details –

PAUL: *What's he doing, three books?*

MARC: He was doing the WOLVERINE book, he had the EXCALIBUR book, he's a novelist, and of course THE X-MEN, and the annuals and all, so he's a pretty busy guy. I'm just doing the one book and I'm pretty stressed sometimes.

PAUL: *The thing I find quite interesting is the whole Australian premise.*

MARC: Yeah.

PAUL: *You're handling the Australian point of view, and I think you're doing a good job. How did you feel about that?*

MARC: Well, I was interested in it. I've always wanted to go there, Australia is just a place that's really fascinating to me. Really, it's like America 200 years ago in some places.

PAUL: *Well, let's say about 20 years ago.*

MARC: No, in some parts, like in the Outback –

PAUL: *Yeah, that's like cowboy times.*

MARC: That's the stuff that I always wanted to see. I can see *any* kind of a city any time, so I want to go see the Outback – that's what I mean by "America 200 years ago," not that Sydney's in the stone age or anything. *(Laughter.)* The Outback fascinates me.

PAUL: *It's very different.*

MARC: And Chris just wanted to shake things up in THE X-MEN. I think he has a fascination for Australia too, the Aborigines and all of that stuff, that culture. This was when we killed off all of the X-Men.

PAUL: *That sounds funny.*

INFERNO
PART THE SECOND
PICKING UP RIGHT WHERE WE LEFT OFF...
...IN THE SECRET, HIGH-TECH, DEEP BASEMENT OF A NEBRASKA ORPHANAGE...
YOU HAVE A CHOICE, CHUMP.
BACK TO THE FUTURE X?
...MUTER SINISTER.
BUT, YOU AVARICIOUS MISTER... MY MOM SAW MY FIRST AND LAST NAME AND DIDN'T CALL ME...
EXCALIBUR

MARC: Yeah, that does – nobody dies in comics. *(Laughter.)* But, Chris wanted a new exotic locale and Australia just seemed to fit the mold real well. He had this whole plan of the X-Men becoming legends, like something out of the Old West, like **Billy the Kid** in Australia type of thing. And there's thousands of square miles of open territory down there, so it's an easy place to hide.

PAUL: *Well, Australia is almost near as large as America.*

MARC: Yeah, and a lot of it is undeveloped area.

PAUL: *What did you do for research? I mean, he writes it –*

MARC: Yeah. Basically, you just go to the bookstore and pick up a few things, or travel books and stuff like that, and you try to get a feel for the place. I think it would be worth my while to make a trip down there, spend a couple of weeks down there.

PAUL: *Marvel should send you guys down there. Didn't they do that a few years ago, send some people to Europe?*

MARC: Yeah. I don't know if they're going to do that kind of stuff anymore, but I wouldn't mind it though.

PAUL: *It would pay off.*

MARC: Tell 'em, Paul

PAUL: *It's a legitimate write-off.*

MARC: Yeah. I heard a story that **Rick Leonardi** went to Russia for his COLOSSUS mini-series – I don't know if that's true or not.

PAUL: *Put it down to research, it's worth a try.*

MARC: Sure, that's what I'd like to do. We're going to be touching more on the

"I keep a razor by my table, ready to slash my wrists."

Australian stuff anyway. I mean, the book has been going like a whirlwind, you know.

PAUL: *I know, but there's some* weird *shit in the Outback, all sorts of things.*

MARC: Some mutant type stuff walking around.

PAUL: *You should do it. Anyway, what do you want to do with THE X-MEN?*

MARC: You know, the X-Men are in a real state of flux right now — we just killed them off again. *(Laughter.)* Not really killed them off, but we kind of sent them all off in different directions, they're all off doing their own thing.

PAUL: *And it's a real big group, really.*

MARC: Yeah. That's one of the things that appeals to me even to this day. I burned out on SPIDER-MAN; it was one guy.

PAUL: *But with THE X-MEN don't you find it hard because sometimes you have to draw as many as thirteen characters doing different things on a page?*

MARC: Yeah, it's real tough. I keep a razor blade by my table just so I'll be ready to slash my wrists. *(Laughter.)* There's some days when I go into this real funk, and I just hit the couch and go to sleep. My brain just overloads and feels like cotton, *literally.* Sometimes it gets a little overwhelming, and you have that contradiction, that Catch-22, of doing a good job, because you have your pride, and doing it fast.

PAUL: *Who's the editor now on X-MEN?*

MARC: **Bob Harras,** he's a great editor.

PAUL: *Does he have much to say about storylines? The impression I get is Chris is the man, what he says goes.*

MARC: That's the impression I had when I got into this, and it turns out that he's not that kind of guy. He *wants* to have . . . I mean, if he's got a certain idea, he's got the right because he's been doing this book for twelve years; he's *earned* that right. But, Bob is a real hands-on type of editor and he lets Chris know if he doesn't like something or if he doesn't think something works. Chris says, "Fine, I can see your point." Everyone needs that, everyone needs to be edited. That was the big problem with all of these creator-owned things —

PAUL: *That was the biggest problem with Marvel in, like, the mid '70s where the writers edited themselves. I didn't like it too much.*

MARC: Yeah, you need someone else to go, "Hey, get off of your high horse, this stuff sucks." It usually turns out for a better product. I mean, let's not confuse it, Chris still would have the final say-so if he wanted to exercise the power. But he's real open to suggestions, you know. A lot of times it helps to come up with something better.

PAUL: *Do you find that his enthusiasm is still there, or is it just a job?*

MARC: Chris? No, the enthusiasm's still there, it really is. I would think that after all of this time it wouldn't be, but . . . I

"X-MEN is pure fantasy stuff, like JONNY QUEST."

think it shows in the book in that things are always changing. He always wants to keep the interest going not only for himself but the readers: which is rule #1, you want to entertain the people who are paying their money for the book.

PAUL: *Do you ever have a conflict over which characters to emphasize? Who are your favorites that maybe* don't *get the exposure?*

MARC: Well, my favorite *does* get a lot of exposure. I hate to say it, because everyone likes Wolverine, he's everybody's *favorite*, but he's fun to draw. I like Rogue, she's an interesting character. I think Storm is a very interesting character; her strength and her leadership is very appealing in the book. Colossus, if I'm feeling in a very sensitive mood. *(Laughter.)* He's fun to draw.

It's also a mood thing. *Because* the characters are so diverse, it is kind of a mood thing. Sometimes if you're feeling sadistic and like a mass murderer, "Hey, Wolverine would be fun to draw today." Or if you feel like cross dressing, "Let's do Rogue today!" *(Laughter.)*

PAUL: *With the characters from NEW MUTANTS or X-FACTOR, have you ever felt like pushing it to mix in those characters?*

MARC: You know, I've never been crazy about the New Mutants, to be honest. They've never really interested me that much. The only one who *did* interest me was Illyana, and they got rid of her.

PAUL: *They did, why?*

MARC: I don't know, she was about the coolest one they had. She was the one that didn't take any shit, you know, and they got rid of her. So, I have no interest in them. I was kind of disappointed when I found out I wouldn't be drawing Nightcrawler, because he went over to EXCALIBUR. I wouldn't mind doing a crossover with EXCALIBUR; interchanging with Alan would be kind of interesting, I think.

PAUL: *Well, there's a lot of damn characters in the book, it must get to be a pain in the ass.*

MARC: It goes back to the interest factor, it holds your interest. Like I was saying about SPIDER-MAN, you can just draw Peter Parker so many times. With THE X-MEN it's unlimited because it's an ensemble cast *and* it's cosmic. I mean, if we want to have a story of the X-Men battling some guys from another planet, going out in space, we can do that. You can't do that with Spider-Man, if you try then it's goofy what happens, because that character has to be based in reality. But X-MEN is pure fantasy stuff, like super-hero JONNY QUEST stuff.

PAUL: *Yeah, it is like JONNY QUEST. I do kind of feel at times that Chris Claremont regurgitates the same old story with the women; I wish he'd go out and meet different women. I mean, with all of these different characters you could really go somewhere.*

MARC: Yeah.

PAUL: *Do you get involved in the story and say, "Look, Chris, I'm a bit fed up with this, how about doing this?"*

MARC: Well, that's my fault because he offers that to me. Like I said before, he's real open to suggestions, but I've — *(Phone interruption).*

PAUL: *So, you could get more involved with storylines, right?*

MARC: Yeah, I could. He asks for input, I just haven't had the time. I'm going to make the time, though: I'm going to have some influence. I think it should work that way between writer and artist.

PAUL: *What's your primary concern doing THE X-MEN?*

MARC: I'd like to do something with Nightcrawler. Like I was saying before about bringing in **Alan Davis**, I'd like to do a crossover with EXCALIBUR and maybe I would do an issue of EXCALIBUR and he would do an issue of THE X-MEN.

PAUL: *Well, are there other things that you want to have a go at?*

MARC: I wouldn't mind doing a BATMAN, like some kind of prestige format BATMAN — just to *do* it. It's one of those things, everybody should draw a BATMAN and a SUPERMAN at least *once* in their life. **Frank Miller** really broke the mold on that, which was a very gutsy move, I admire him for that — and fortunately it paid off.

PAUL: *So, what are you after when you're drawing a story? Do you push*

...I ALWAYS WIN!
WHAT AM I TO DO?!
ARE OUR FOES WHOLLY BROOD, OR STILL IN SOME MANNER...
...THE PEOPLE THEY ONCE WERE?!
THEY MEAN OUR DEATHS--
--BUT IF THEY ARE INNOCENT AT HEART...
...HAVE WE THE RIGHT TO KILL, EVEN IN SELF-DEFENSE?!!

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"These days, man, they can do all kinds of shit."

yourself to try to do something that's different?

MARC: I don't really have a stencil — at least I don't think so. You fall into that cookie cutter stencil stuff, though. I do have the **Silvestri** women now; I know that I follow the same mold.

PAUL: *Well, Cynthia is the Silvestri woman right there.*

MARC: Yeah, people accuse me of that. You fall into it, everybody does, especially when you're on a tight schedule. It all falls under the category of style, I think, too. I mean, not to compare myself to his talent, but **Frazetta** has a certain way of drawing women.

PAUL: *Your women are very sexy, too.*

MARC: Well, I think you kind of need that in this book. If you read the plots, you can't help but draw them that way — which is good because we're both thinking along the same lines, a couple of perverts. *(Laughter.)*

PAUL: *That lacy underwear, man — and then Chaykin's BLACK KISS came out —*

MARC: My stuff's Disney compared to **Chaykin's.**

PAUL: *What I'm getting at: Do you feel that you're — it's a term I often use — acting with a pencil?*

MARC: Yeah, I do it all of the time. I have a big mirror that I stand in front of — like a complete idiot I'm doing all of this posturing in front of the mirror, all of this mugging. I think you need to do that; I do that almost every panel. And I rifle my girlfriend's wardrobe — and I pretend. *(Laughter.)*

CYNTHIA: *(From nearby somewhere.)* What!

MARC: It's a joke, it's a joke.

CYNTHIA: What do you do to my wardrobe?

MARC: Nothing.

PAUL: *He's all male, don't worry about it. (Laughter.)*

MARC: Oh oh, my dog just ate a ten-dollar bill.

PAUL: *She did, yeah.*

MARC: I hope nobody wants a refund. *(Laughter.)*

PAUL: *What other things would you like to do at Marvel?*

MARC: Well, I'd like to do something with my brother. We're thinking of something right now as a matter of fact, and I'm going to pitch it to Marvel one of these days. What's going on behind our heads?

PAUL: *She burnt my comic book, man! (Laughter.)*

MARC: Just like my dog, man; my dog took a dump on one of my X-MENs. There's all these other comics on the floor, okay, so my dog takes a shit on mine.

PAUL: *Was it the one that Vince Colletta inked?*

MARC: No. *(Laughter.)*

PAUL: *Now, you're pretty happy doing THE X-MEN.*

MARC: Yeah

PAUL: *What are the other things that you want to do?*

MARC: Who knows? I enjoy doing THE X-MEN now.

PAUL: *What did you think of the X-MEN cartoon show, did you see that?*

MARC: I saw, like, fifteen minutes of it. I was disappointed that it didn't get picked up somewhere, it looks great. And it still might, and there's always talk of movies and stuff.

PAUL: *They should do an animated feature, man. It's got a big market out there.*

MARC: Yeah I keep hearing live action — they pull things out of their hats, you know. BATMAN turned out okay.

PAUL: *Yeah, but Batman doesn't have the powers that these characters have.*

MARC: But these days, man, they can do all kinds of shit, you never know.

PAUL: *At least you don't have a guy that stretches and a guy turning into flames.*

MARC: That would be a headache, but think of the great rubber suit they could make for Ben Grimm. *(Laughter.)*

PAUL: *How do you . . . Describe your*

Duwane Pendarzis and Elaine Mclaurin in

We have no idea what this piece was for (or from) — but ain't it nice?

"UP IN HARLEM"

©1989 Marc Silvestri

"I won't even read the plot, I'll just go straight to page #1."

working process.

MARC: Well, I'll tell you, it was really tough to work when I first moved out here. *(Laughter.)*

PAUL: *Well, you've got the ocean just outside your door.*

MARC: Yeah, and all of these people are sitting back here, relaxing. I like it out here. The California lifestyle is real different to me. But how I work, I think it's fairly common. I mean, there are some guys that work really *weird*, you know. I'm pretty straightforward, just get up in the morning, have my breakfast, read the paper, play with the dog for a minute or two, and then I get over there and I start. If the deadline is really tight, I won't even read the plot, I'll just go straight to page #1.

It's funny, but a lot of times when I read a plot through, I'll get to a certain section and I'll think, "Oh, no, this is gonna be kinda hard to draw," or "Oh, no, I'll need a lot of reference for this," or something like that, and that haunts me in the back of my head and becomes daunting. The stuff that I'm drawing may be the simplest stuff that I've done hundreds of times before, but I'll be thinking ten pages down the line there's this to do, and all of a sudden it becomes a real chore, and it actually does slow me down. It kind of intimidates me. And then it turns out that the first five or six pages are shit because I'm all uptight.

So, what I like to do is grab the story, look at page #1, and I *draw* page #1. The good thing about working with Chris is that he'll put page so-and-so, page so-and-so — which isn't written in *stone*, I can extend a page, I can reduce a page, or I can cut it out altogether if I want to. It gives me the guideline that I need, otherwise I would *have* to go through the story. And I don't want to do that either, because I get impatient when I want to start a story — want to *do* it, I want to start *drawing*.

PAUL: *When you're drawing do you have a preconceived idea . . . What is your breakdown like?*

MARC: Chris sends me a plot with some sections of dialogue, and I find that I have to edit a lot of it because you just can't fit it all in there. A lot of times I'll have that whole page pictured in my head as 1 read; the action's flowing through my head like a movie.

PAUL: *Yeah, that's the same way I work. Sometimes I don't even read the script. The director will say, "Did you read the script?" and I lie to him! (Laughter.) I just turn up and do it.*

MARC: I don't want to read it, I just want to draw it — you need that freshness to get the best image. I like to keep that spontaneity, and lately I have been, I think you can see a difference. At first I was putting in seven or eight panels a page, because I was *intimidated* by it; but after talking with Chris I realized that he *wants* to be edited. He's just putting all of this stream of consciousness stuff in there, whatever he thinks, so I just pick and choose, or I'll add my own stuff.

PAUL: *You know, I've noticed in your stuff the women are more realistic, and it's not as heavy on the leather and lace and that. Do you feel like THE X-MEN was for young boys before they moved on to PLAYBOY?*

MARC: *(Laughter.)* This is what we call the PLAYBOY PRIMER. No, it's not that bad, come on. It's not like BLACK SMOOCH *(Laughter.)* I think we got in trouble by somebody and so we toned it down — some mothers were after us or something like that. We weren't trying to do anything, it's harmless stuff. As kinky as we get, which isn't very —

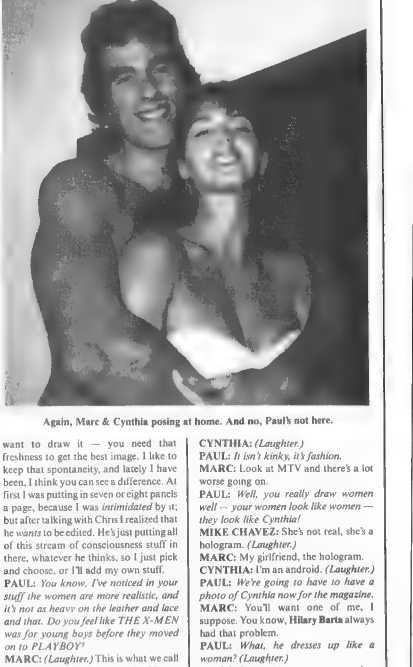

Photo: Rick W.

Again, Marc & Cynthia posing at home. And no, Paul's not here.

CYNTHIA: *(Laughter.)*

PAUL: *It isn't kinky, it's fashion.*

MARC: Look at MTV and there's a lot worse going on.

PAUL: *Well, you really draw women well — your women look like women — they look like Cynthia!*

MIKE CHAVEZ: She's not real, she's a hologram. *(Laughter.)*

MARC: My girlfriend, the hologram.

CYNTHIA: I'm an android. *(Laughter.)*

PAUL: *We're going to have to have a photo of Cynthia now for the magazine.*

MARC: You'll want one of me, I suppose. You know, **Hilary Barta** always had that problem.

PAUL: *What, he dresses up like a woman? (Laughter.)*

MARC: I remember at one convention Hilary — for those who don't know to this day, **Hilary Barta** is a man —

MIKE: Is that right? *(Laughter.)*

MARC: He left the table for something and kids would come up to his girlfriend and say, "Hilary, can I have your autograph please." *(Laughter.)* I always

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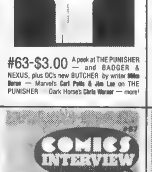

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"But Chris hasn't done that PMS story yet."

give him shit about that.

PAUL: *That's like "A Boy Named Sue."*

MARC: It's *worse*, but it's okay because he's talented, so he can get away with it.

PAUL: *Well, that's why he's got a great sense of humor with PLASTIC MAN.*

MARC: What were we talking about, anyway?

PAUL: *Young boys reading THE X-MEN. (Laughter.) Do you think it's the next step towards getting into PLAYBOY and stuff like that?*

MARC: No —

CYNTHIA: Oh, come on. Can I answer this question, please?

MARC: Oh, shit.

CYNTHIA: It's little boys drooling with hard-ons. *(Laughter.)*

MARC: Oh —

MIKE: There you go, the truth hurts.

MARC: That's not true.

CYNTHIA: It's *very* true and you know damn well it is.

MARC: No, not little drooling boys with hard-ons — big drooling artists with hard-ons. *(Laughter.)*

PAUL: *Well, probably that's why BLACK KISS really got off. You look at THE X-MEN, THE X-MEN has done very well for a bunch of turtles, has done very well for Chaykin's little sexcapades — except I think that Chris Claremont likes women, just dressed up in panties and stuff.*

MARC: Well, who doesn't? *(Laughter.)*

PAUL: *I'm not against it.*

MARC: Here comes male chauvinism.

CYNTHIA: I feel that, I do. When I read Chris's scripts, I sense it.

MIKE: Do yourself a favor, don't read 'em. *(Laughter.)*

PAUL: *Cynthia doesn't work on the comic book, Mark does, so —*

CYNTHIA: But I model it, and I try to give him as much T&A as possible. *(Laughter.)*

PAUL: *So, who are the . . . what is the age group that reads THE X-MEN?*

MARC: Chris or Bob told me once, the demographics of THE X-MEN and stuff, and it's pretty wide. We have some of the older readers following the comic book, we have young readers, and we have a lot of women, too — I think because of the strong central female characters. They appeal not only to the *men*, they appeal to the *women* out there, because they *are* positive role models *despite* what we were talking about just now.

PAUL: *Well, what I like . . . I think he writes the same story, but he writes his characters with genuine feeling.*

MARC: He does, yeah.

PAUL: *And he seems to care about women.*

MARC: Yeah.

PAUL: *But he hasn't done that PMS Syndrome story yet, that's what I'm waiting for.*

MARC: Next issue it's going to be the PMX-Women. *(Laughter.)*

PAUL: *But if Rogue gets really — well, she's dead isn't she?*

MARC: Nobody dies in comics; besides, she's one of the most popular characters in THE X-MEN right now. She's one of my favorites to draw.

PAUL: *She's sexy, too.*

MARC: Well, that's the stencil. I have a problem with . . . You know who's real

"Just look at the crop of young guys

good at separating characters, **Alan Davis.** You know which is which without having to have it in the copy; that's one thing I have to work on. It's just a question of putting a little bit more thought into that, I think. What were we talking about, the age groups?

PAUL: *Yeah, the demographics.*

MARC: We have pretty wide demographics, I think that's one of the reasons why the book sells so well.

PAUL: *What are the sales, 300,000 per issue?*

MARC: No, we're way above that.

PAUL: *Really!*

MARC: We're up around 400,000, we had a few issues last year up above 450,000. I think in this twice-monthly thing it's way up there, like around a million books a month.

PAUL: *That was a pretty scary thing to do, wasn't it?*

MARC: Twice monthly? I think it was a safe bet, it's THE X-MEN. As it turned out, I couldn't handle the schedule so **Rick Leonardi** did a few issues in there. That was just a big headache, you know. We had some slipups — I would draw something *completely* different from what he would draw. Our styles are pretty different, too. He's got a *good* style, I like to look at his stuff, but it's quirky.

PAUL: *It's cartooney.*

MARC: Yeah. It isn't a great mix if you put two issues together. We're going to be prepared for that next year; if I can, I'll do all of the issues.

PAUL: *Well, you could maintain it by having the same inker.*

MARC: Well, *I* could maintain it if we started that way immediately, from day one, like, working on a three-week schedule on the book. Instead we start worrying about cranking these things out in May. None of us were prepared — I was the *least* prepared out of everybody. The plots weren't coming in fast enough and I wasn't putting out the pencils fast enough, the schedule was getting farther and farther behind. I feel so sorry for Bob, the editor — I owe him big for messing up the schedule and stuff.

PAUL: *It worked out pretty good; I don't think the dealers were pissed off, the book sold and everything.*

MARC: They never have a problem selling the book. We have to get some new people buying the book — which we *have*, we've gotten a few new customers.

CYNTHIA: Yakyakyakyakyakyakyakyakyakyakyakyakyakyakyak.

MARC: We've got a cockatoo! *(Laughter.)*

PAUL: *I've just been looking over a lot of your stuff, and I was impressed by the fact that you don't swipe from anybody, you just draw. And you draw a lot of long shots, full figure shots, and then an extreme close-up — you have your own style is what I'm saying.*

MARC: Yeah. In a comic book I think you *have* to vary your camera angles and all of that stuff, the long shot and the close-up, otherwise you bore the reader.

PAUL: *Drawing the comic book day in and day out, do you ever feel like for a change of pace following the techniques of Will Eisner or somebody, just to make it different?*

MARC: I think it's more a sense of subject matter. If you want to draw somebody in really spastic action, dramatic ation, you think automatically of **Kirby.** It's the stuff that comes to mind. If you need something more sensitive, you'll go for someone else, a different kind of an influence. You know, recently I got on this **Mike Mignola** kick — I did two issues like a tip of the hat to **Mike Mignola,** because I'm such a big fan of his. Some of his stuff, mostly the lighting effects, it was coming through and I was enjoying myself because it was fun to be drawing in that kind of a style. There's guys that make a habit of that, which I don't approve of. Everyone's influenced, though — just look at the crop of young guys today, it's almost kind of disgusting to be honest.

PAUL: *Well, like, I think to swipe isn't so bad; to swipe badly, that's what's really bad. If you're going to do it, do it well. It's like if you're going to knock me down, knock me on my ass.*

MARC: Yeah, take the breath away But . . . do it the way that you draw. In a schedule crunch you really don't have time to dig through all kinds of photo reference and all of that stuff, and a lot of

A few panels from Marc's "fan" days.

A BIOLOGICAL ENTITY OF MASSIVE PROPORTIONS HEADING THIS WAY.
I MUSS ADMIT, I'M NOT GENUINELY PLEASED WITH THE LESS-THAN WARM RECEPTION.
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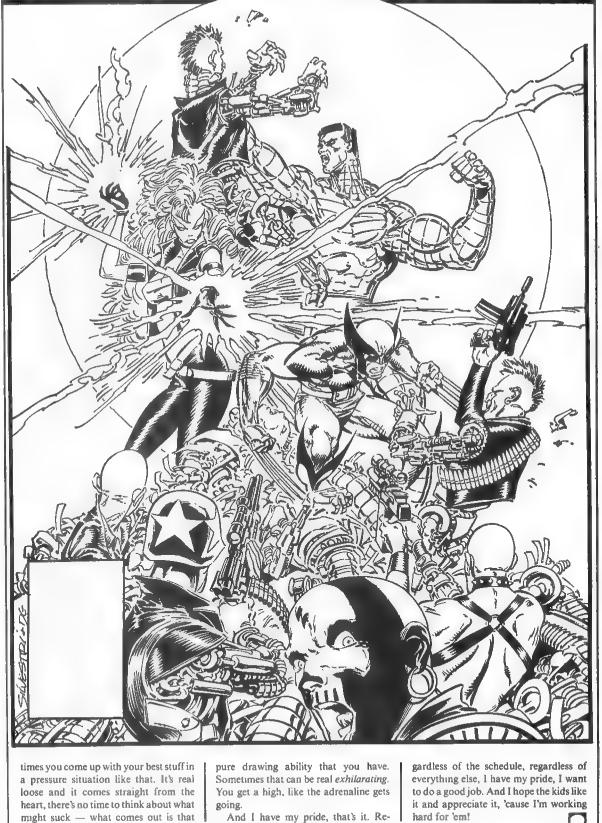
today; it's kind of disgusting to be honest."



times you come up with your best stuff in a pressure situation like that. It's real loose and it comes straight from the heart, there's no time to think about what might suck — what comes out is that pure drawing ability that you have. Sometimes that can be real *exhilarating*. You get a high, like the adrenaline gets going.

And I have my pride, that's it. Regardless of the schedule, regardless of everything else, I have my pride, I want to do a good job. And I hope the kids like it and appreciate it, 'cause I'm working hard for 'em!

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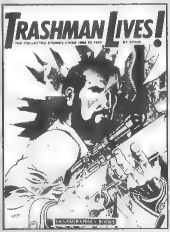

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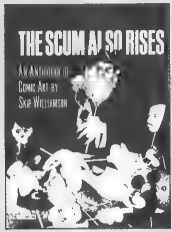

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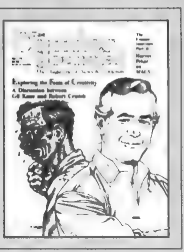

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"I did an entire comic book at

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Stout's Extra Fine Tip Sharpie on vellum produced this unused rendering for a matte painting of Castle Greyskull.

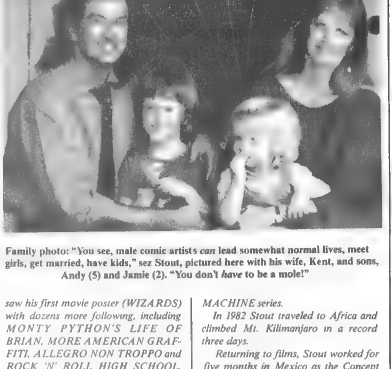
All artwork accompanying this interview is © 1989 William Stout, unless otherwise noted.

Wm. STOUT

In parts one and two, we learned that William Stout was born in Salt Lake City, Utah in 1949 and raised in Los Angeles. At seventeen, he won a full scholarship to the Chouinard Art Institute (California Institute of the Arts) where he obtained his Bachelor's Degree.

Stout's first professional work was in 1968: the cover for the first issue of the pulp magazine COVEN 13. He continued doing illustrations for a variety of clients and contributed to Petersen Publications' CYCLE-TOONS. In 1971

Disney, called MICKEY AT 60."



Family photo: "You see, male comic artists *can* lead somewhat normal lives, meet girls, get married, have kids," sez Stout, pictured here with his wife, Kent, and sons, Andy (5) and Jamie (2). "You don't *have* to be a mole!"

Stout began to assist Russ Manning on the TARZAN syndicated comic strips. He worked with Harvey Kurtzman and Will Elder on the "Little Annie Fanny" strip for PLAYBOY in 1972. While in Paris the following year, Stout was offered work by the prestigious European magazine, PILOTE. From 1973 to 1974 he produced over 35 "bootleg" record album covers which won him national recognition (and a recent retrospective in the French magazine METAL HURLANT). Stout also worked with the Firesign Theatre creating the graphics for their LP, IN THE NEXT WORLD, YOU'RE ON YOUR OWN .

From 1976 to 1977 Bill was art director for the rock magazine BOMP. 1977 also saw his first movie poster (WIZARDS) with dozens more following, including MONTY PYTHON'S LIFE OF BRIAN, MORE AMERICAN GRAFFITI, ALLEGRO NON TROPPO and ROCK 'N' ROLL HIGH SCHOOL. The same year his first one-man show, "The Prehistoric World of William Stout" won the enthusiasm of paleontologists and fantasy lovers alike.

Bill worked as a conceptual designer on BUCK ROGERS in 1978. This led to more film work, including a large series of paintings and designs for the forthcoming AMBER epic (based on Roger Zelazny's popular science-fantasy series). This finally culminated with his year-and-a-half's work with Ron Cobb as the production artist on John Milius's CONAN. He also storyboarded the stunt sequences for FIRST BLOOD and co-wrote the film THE WARRIOR AND THE SORCERESS. Stout's work on CONAN, however, was interrupted for production of what many of his fans consider his masterwork — the 1981 Bantam book, THE DINOSAURS. A FANTASTIC NEW VIEW OF A LOST ERA, with over 80 color paintings and more than 50 black and white illustrations. LIFE magazine devoted five pages of coverage to the book. This was followed by RAY BRADBURY'S DINOSAUR TALES and THE LITTLE BLUE BRONTOSAURUS (recipient of the Children's Choice Award for 1984). In addition, he recently completed a series of covers for Bantam's TIME MACHINE series.

In 1982 Stout traveled to Africa and climbed Mt. Kilimanjaro in a record three days.

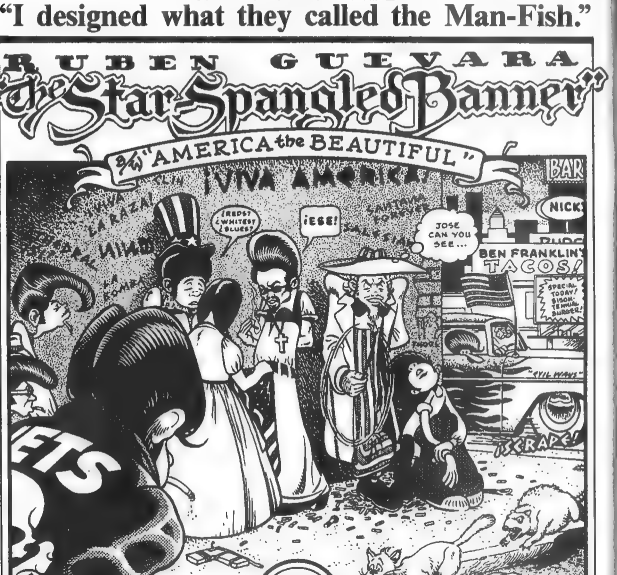
Returning to films, Stout worked for five months in Mexico as the Concept Artist for CONAN THE DESTROYER. While in Mexico, he also dubbed the voice of a robot in DUNE. A series of paintings and drawings for THE CLAN OF THE CAVE BEAR and RED SONJA came next.

Bill then gave vision to Steve Miner's GODZILLA, KING OF THE MONSTERS and Dan O'Bannon's RETURN OF THE LIVING DEAD. As Production Designer on both of these films, William Stout became the youngest person in film history to hold this title. Work followed on THE HITCHER. Then Tobe Hooper hired Stout to be the Conceptual Designer on INVADERS FROM MARS. Stout has written and executed the initial design work for a $25 million film for Jim Henson. Stout was Production Designer for MASTERS OF THE UNIVERSE in 1986-87.

Since 1978 Bill has also been Art Director for Varese-Sarabande Records (producing several covers for them as well). He also continues to create covers for other companies and recording artists such as Rhino Records and the Beach Boys.

The work of William Stout has also appeared in the form of prints, television commercials, T-shirt designs, comic books, murals and even toy box covers.

"I designed what they called the Man-Fish."



Only the lettering ended up on the final printed picture sleeve of this 45 for Rhino Records. The art, though received enthusiastically by the performer and company at first, was later deemed "too controversial".

His work has been published in Australia, England, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Japan and the United States.

Bill Stout worked as a consultant to Walt Disney Imagineering as a Conceptualist, Designer and Planner for Euro Disneyland. He also designed additions and modifications for Disneyland, Disney World and Tokyo Disneyland.

After leaving Disney at the end of '88, Stout took off for a month in Patagonia and Antarctica.

He now resides in Pasadena, California with his wife, former actress Kent Wilson and their sons, Andrew and James.

Here in the third and final part of this interview, David Seidman takes over from Lamar Waldron and Susan Barrows to bring us up to date on the artistic doings of the dean of dinosaurs . . .

DAVID SEIDMAN: *First, Bill, we know you worked on both of the CONAN films. What did you do on RED SONJA?*

BILL STOUT: About one week. *(Laughter.)* I designed some monsters.

DAVID: *Was it just a one-week job?*

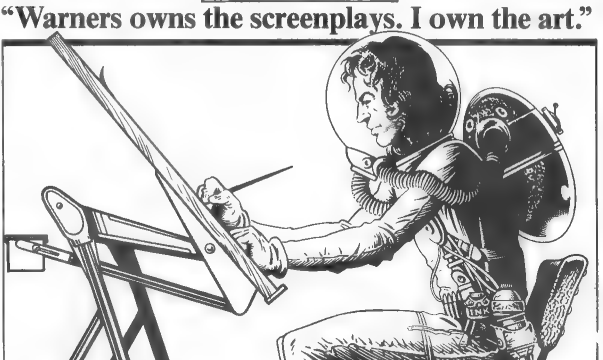
BILL: It was just a one-week job. They already had the picture rolling, they just weren't happy with the monsters they had. So, **Raffaella DeLaurentiis** called and asked me to design some monsters.

DAVID: *And did they actually end up using your monsters?*

BILL: I couldn't tell. *(Laughter.)* I designed what they called the Man-Fish, and mostly what I saw in the film was a fin.

DAVID: *That's real helpful. (Laughter.) Well, I want to touch on some things*

"Warners owns the screenplays. I own the art."



A Seattle Sci-Fi XPO program book sported this Stout self-portrait inside its pages.

from the earlier interview, just for clarification. On the Henson dinosaur picture that was never made, you did designs and you did two screenplays, one with dialogue and one without?

BILL: Right.

DAVID: *Whatever happened to the work that you did on that?*

BILL: Warners owns the screenplays, I own the art. We have an agreement where Warners owns the reproduction rights to the art; however if I do a book, say THE ART OF WILLIAM STOUT, I can use those pictures in that book without having to pay them. And *also*, if I want to use those pictures one time as illustrations for something else, I can do that. So **Byron Preiss** is trying to get **Ray Bradbury** to write stories to the pictures.

DAVID: *That would be nice. Well, on MASTERS OF THE UNIVERSE you said something that was kind of confusing. You said that you and the other designers in essence designed Mattel's toy line. I'm pretty sure the toys were around for some time before the film.*

BILL: Sure. But each year Mattel issues a new line of "Masters" toys. We didn't actually design the *whole* '88 line, but that was our bargaining position, because we didn't *know* how much or how little they were going to use of our artwork. The bargaining position was that if they were going to make *toys* from all these new characters we were going to be designing, then we should be compensated for that.

DAVID: *Ah, this concerned new characters.*

BILL: Right. And they were designed so *early* in the film that Mattel was just waiting at our doorsteps — "You got 'em done yet?" *(Laughter.)* Because they needed that lead time to have *their* designers go over them and sculpt them, do the models for them, take them to the toy fairs and get advance sales, so that by the time the film came out they could have the toys in the stores. Out of the stuff that we designed, so far they've only made three figures, Saurod, Karg and Blade.

DAVID: *So you had some kind of profit-sharing deal going.*

"Disney said, 'We retain the paintings, it's our policy.'"

BILL: Right.

DAVID: *Have there been other deals like this since? Have you been able to get that kind of an agreement on later films?*

BILL: Well, right after MASTERS I went to work for Disney, and I *did* use that in negotiating my contract with Disney. I said their salary offer was fine, but I would retain the original paintings. And Disney said, "Well, *we* always retain the original paintings, it's our company policy." So I said, "Well, it's *my* corporation's policy that *I* retain the original paintings. You see, the reason I retain my original paintings is I have such a fan following that I can turn around and sell these paintings for more money than you're paying me per week to work here — so in essence if I just *gave* you the paintings, I would be working for free, because *you* could turn around and sell the paintings and make back my salary. So, here's what I'll do: Every few weeks I'll make a list of all of the paintings that I have done, I'll price them, then you can buy them."

DAVID: *So, Disney does retain the paintings, but they have bought them from you.*

BILL: Exactly.

DAVID: *Nice deal.*

BILL: And in addition to that, I have it in my contract that if they decide to *merchandise* these paintings, sell them as prints or something, then we have to work out an additional deal.

DAVID: *Speaking of Disney, how did you get hired into Imagineering?*

BILL: It was through my bootleg record album covers.

DAVID: *Somebody saw the bootlegs and decided to hire you?*

BILL: There was a guy working at Disney Imagineering, **Tim Onosko** from Wisconsin, who was a fan of my stuff from the first time he saw it, which was the bootleg record album covers. He kept me in mind, bless his heart, all through the years, saw the other stuff I was doing, and as soon as he got to Disney he said, "The guy you gotta get in here is **Bill Stout.** He's done this and this and this." So they said, "Call him up, see if he's interested." Tim called me up, it sounded intriguing, and I had finished MASTERS OF THE UNIVERSE and had just turned down a couple of horror films. So I went over to talk and I was hired that afternoon.

DAVID: *Nice way to get a job. Well, your paperback covers were mentioned in the interview with Lamar and Susan, but that was just kind of glossed over. What paperback work have you done?*

BILL: Mostly I've been doing the TIME MACHINE series for **Byron Preiss.** The TIME MACHINE series is similar to the CHOOSE YOUR OWN ADVENTURE series, where the stories are written in such a way that *you* are having an adventure. You come to points in the books where you have to make decisions, and each decision leads to different pages in the book. You can read one book 100 different times and have 100 different adventures, depending upon what deci-

Pen and ink sketches by Wm. Stout.

So I said, 'Well, it's my policy that I retain the paintings.'"

sions you make. Byron has these books illustrated by comic-book artists, and I did the covers to about eight or nine of these books.

DAVID: *Are these in the bookstores now?*

BILL: Yeah.

DAVID: *And have you done any other paperback covers?*

BILL: Just those and the DINOSAUR TALES book that Byron did.

DAVID: *How did you get that job, did Byron just call you up out of the blue one day?*

BILL: That's right. *(Laughter.)* He asked me if I'd like to do some. **Dave Stevens** did one, **Richard Hescox** did one that was when Richard and Dave and I were sharing a studio. I've stopped doing them, I was getting too much interference from Bantam.

DAVID: *What kind of interference were they giving you?*

BILL: Basically . . . I was doing these covers obviously not to make money, because in the length of time it takes to do a cover I can do many more profitable things. I was just doing them for the *fun* of it. When they started asking for major changes on things that I was doing for fun, it stopped being fun, so I stopped doing them. The best selling book they've had so far in that series has been GO BACK TO THE TIME OF THE DINOSAURS, so they wanted to do a second one. I did a cover which they rejected, and then I did a *second* cover which they rejected, and that was the straw that broke the camel's back.

DAVID: *That would do it, if you're not getting paid enough to compensate for that kind of aggravation.*

BILL: Exactly I did two *completely* finished art pieces.

DAVID: *Will those ever see print anywhere?*

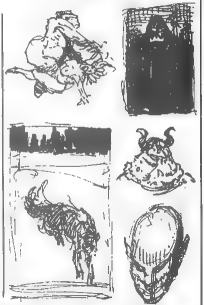
BILL: Oh, eventually. *(Laughter.)* Everything comes out eventually. What happens usually is Byron will remember that stuff — the cover to the *first* TIME MACHINE book was a rejected *poster* for THE DINOSAURS.

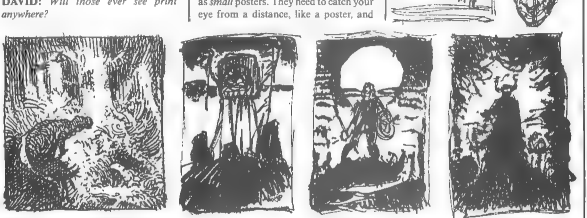
DAVID: *Nothing ever goes away forever.*

BILL: No, it doesn't. Byron kept that in his mind and when this series came up he thought, "Oh boy, Bill won't even have to do the work, it's already done, I've got the cover to the first book!" So he'll probably find some other use for those rejected covers.

DAVID: *Sounds good. How does doing paperback covers compare to doing movie posters? They're both basically meant to be a single image to advertise a product so that people will get interested.*

BILL: Well, I think of paperback covers as *small* posters. They need to catch your eye from a distance, like a poster, and





"I'm doing two comics projects, oddly enough, a

they're competing on the rack with all kinds of other covers, so they need to be distinct and bold. That's *my* approach to designing them.

DAVID: *Do you also design things like the title type, or do you just do the illustrations and say where to put the title type?*

BILL: I usually just do the illustrations and say where to put the title type. I can't think of any that I've art directed. Byron has a very good art director, **Alex Jay.**

DAVID: *You said, moving on to comics, that you just loved Steve Ditko's work to a tremendous degree.*

BILL: *Yes!*

DAVID: *I was looking at your work, I was looking at Ditko's, and I think I'm missing some connection here. Your work doesn't look very much like his.*

BILL: No. *(Laughter.)*

DAVID: *What is it about Ditko's work that you like?*

BILL: It's this sort of spinal *weirdness* that comes through. You know that there's something very different about the way that he perceives the world, and that comes through in his work. For instance in the DOCTOR STRANGE stories he did, he created the most *bizarre,* weird, and . . . surreal is too tame a word for what he created — the landscapes and worlds in that series. You look at later artists who did DOCTOR STRANGE, they blew out the panel borders or they made the page look like a giant face or something, and they exaggerated all *different* kinds of things to get that effect. **Ditko** did it in just plain, square panels, *he* didn't need all the tricks. His world in his mind was strange enough that he could convey bizzarreness within more traditional storytelling forms.

DAVID: *And in a sense that is similar to the sort of things that you do, because when you do an image it's all in the image itself.*

BILL: Yes. I used to do all that break-away comics form altering weirdness, until I saw guys like **Ditko** and **Toth** doing this wonderful stuff *within* the confines of the fairly conservative and traditional comic-book layout. That made me realize that that's *really* what's important, the thinking that goes on in telling the story rather than trying to do what I consider this adolescent bravado of impressing people.

DAVID: *It's more important what you put within the panels than monkeying with the format itself.*

BILL: Absolutely. It's a *harder* discipline, harder to do, harder to pull off. It's *easier* to impress people by arranging the panels in such a way where it makes a Tyrannosaurus Rex or something — actually that's not hard to do. It's much harder to take a six-panel layout and make what's in those panels compelling and interesting.

DAVID: *Well, as far as contemporary comics, what are you reading that really turns you on?*

BILL: Anything by **Alan Moore.** Anything that **Moebius** does. **Dave Stevens'** work. **Paul Chadwick's** CONCRETE is great! I haven't read XENOZOIC TALES yet, but the art is *so* nice.

DAVID: *Yes!*

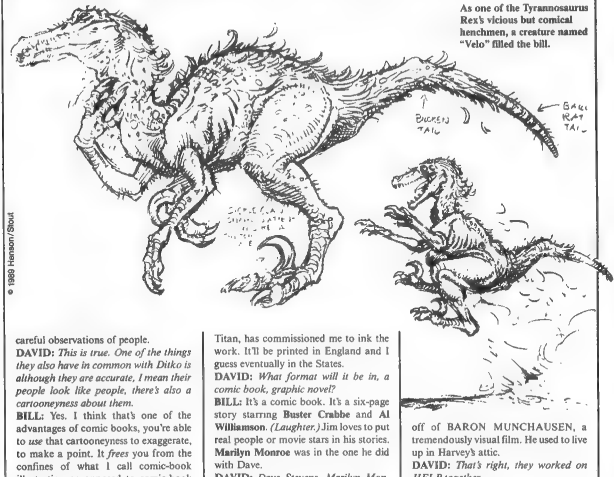
BILL: All the stuff that the **Hernandez Brothers** do.

DAVID: *They are also people who work within that same kind of very simple format.*

BILL: Exactly, and you can see *their Ditko* influence, the beautiful simplicity of the line. They are able to capture the subtle nuances of personality and body English and stuff in just a few lines. It's *amazing*, they have been able to boil down that essence by doing thousands and thousands of drawings and making

The magnificent Styracosaurus appeared as a pompous, self-centered, but ultimately likeable character in Stout's dinosaur film.

story for Kurtzman, and inking a Sullivan story."



As one of the Tyrannosaurus Rex's vicious but comical henchmen, a creature named "Velo" filled the bill.

© 1989 Hansen/Stout

careful observations of people.

DAVID: *This is true. One of the things they also have in common with Ditko is although they are accurate, I mean their people look like people, there's also a cartooneyness about them.*

BILL: Yes. I think that's one of the advantages of comic books, you're able to *use* that cartooneyness to exaggerate, to make a point. It *frees* you from the confines of what I call comic-book illustration as opposed to comic-book storytelling, where you're just doing realistic portrayals of things. Certainly **Eisner** knows that.

DAVID: *Oh, yes.*

BILL: I find *that* kind of stuff much more appealing and freeing and interesting than traditional illustration styles applied to comics.

DAVID: *Now, you're working on a couple of comics?*

BILL: Yeah, I'm doing *two* comics projects, oddly enough, a full-color story for HARVEY KURTZMAN'S STRANGE ADVENTURES, and I'm inking a **Jim Sullivan** story called "Take One Capsule Every Million Years."

DAVID: *The record should show that Bill is smiling very widely. (Laughter.) Who is Jim Sullivan?*

BILL: Jim Sullivan is a Boston artist, he hasn't done too many stories, but when he does they look like **Frazetta's** drawing them. **Dave Stevens** inked a story of his for the 3-D ALIEN WORLDS. This is a story that got printed in pencil previously, and now an English publisher, Titan, has commissioned me to ink the work. It'll be printed in England and I guess eventually in the States.

DAVID: *What format will it be in, a comic book, graphic novel?*

BILL: It's a comic book. It's a six-page story starring **Buster Crabbe** and **Al Williamson**. *(Laughter.)* Jim loves to put real people or movie stars in his stories. **Marilyn Monroe** was in the one he did with Dave.

DAVID: *Dave Stevens, Marilyn Monroe, oh my!*

BILL: What a pair, a match made in heaven. The **Kurtzman** story is another **Byron Preiss** project. It's going to be a large trade paperback in full color on nice glossy paper. Harvey is writing and doing the layouts for a whole bunch of stories, and he's asking some of his favorite people, people he's worked with in the past, to illustrate the stories. He wrote a special dinosaur and caveman story for me, called "Schmegeggi of the Cavemen." And he's collaborating with **Robert Crumb** on a Western story, which I can't *wait* to see! And **Moebius** is doing something for the book.

DAVID: *Good heavens.*

BILL: *I'm* excited! Byron was just here and I gave him a whole list of other people he should get.

DAVID: *Will it be a long time before this gets on the stands?*

BILL: I think it's supposed to be out at the end of 1989.

DAVID: *Who else did you recommend?*

BILL: Terry Gilliam. Terry's just come off of BARON MUNCHAUSEN, a tremendously visual film. He used to live up in Harvey's attic.

DAVID: *That's right, they worked on HELP together.*

BILL: Yeah. I just think it would be a good idea commercially, because you get a good crossover market there. You get all of the **Monty Python** fans, the people who are interested in all of the stuff that **Gilliam** does, looking at a book that they might not ordinarily pick up. Anyway, I also suggested **Richard Corben**, **Dave Stevens, Mark Schultz** who does XENOZOIC TALES, and the **Hernandez Brothers,** and . . . who else is interesting? *(Laughter.)* Well, there were at least half-a-dozen other people. Oh, **Eisner.** *(Laughter.)*

DAVID: *Oh, yes. Eisner and Kurtzman, what a combination.*

BILL: I know, I know, a mind-boggler. He may never do it, but it doesn't cost but a phone call to ask.

DAVID: *That's true. On this project what are you doing, what did Kurtzman send you?*

BILL: Loose layouts.

DAVID: *With dialogue?*

BILL: Yeah.

DAVID: *And you're doing the finishes.*

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COMICS INTERVIEW MAGAZINE

"Technique I learned from Kurtzman doing ANNIE."

Though not technically accurate, Stout's early dinosaur drawings exhibit a raw, sensual understanding of the beasts.

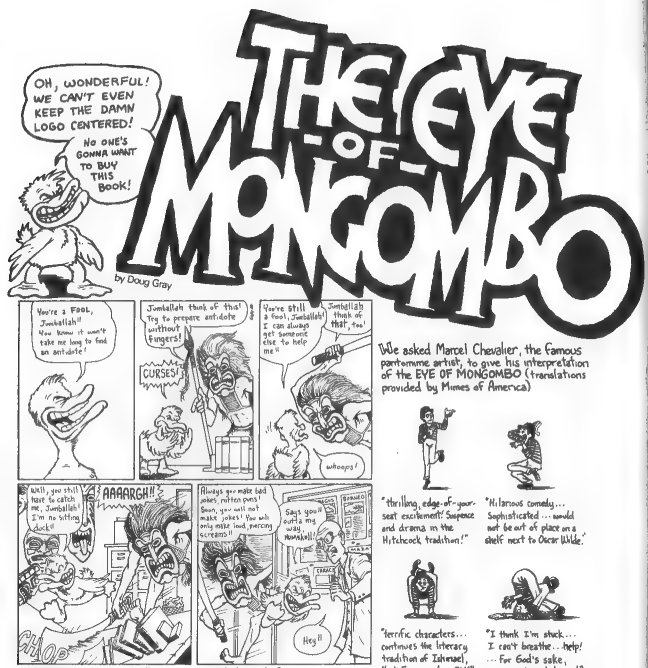
BILL: Yes.

DAVID: *Are you also doing the color on that?*

BILL: Yes, I'm painting each of the pages the way I painted most of the illustrations in my dinosaur book. First I'll pencil it, then I'll ink it . . . I developed this technique while I was trying to recreate the old techniques of **Arthur Rakham** and **Edmund Dulac**. I did a lot of research on the way they worked and I found the *closest* way to approximate that work is basically this: I make a mixture of sepia and black ink, that makes the lines dark but there's a slightly *warmer* quality to the line work, especially if you brush a raw umber wash on top of that, some of the lines bleed a little and it softens. I like that, it gives it a sort of late 19th century parchment look. And then on top of that I start doing watercolor glazes, building up the color, which is actually a technique I learned from **Kurtzman** while doing ANNIE FANNY. And finally when it's up to an almost finished point, then I take out the Prismacolor pencils and just tick in a few highlights and shadows, beef up the color just a little bit. A lot of work, but it's a neat effect when it's done.

DAVID: *What other comics have you done recently?*

BILL: Actually, I did an *entire* comic book while I was at Disney, called MICKEY AT 60, because it was Mickey Mouse's 60th anniversary. I was sitting in a meeting one day, a very *boring* meeting, and I did a little sketch thinking, "Gee, what would Mickey *really* look like if he were 60? *(Laughter.)* He hadn't done a picture in years, I thought he'd probably sort of let himself go, was living in a little bungalow in Hollywood — so I did this rather grotesque drawing. It struck an instant chord amongst my fellow employees, so just for the heck of it I did one little strip and left the word balloons blank, and I passed it to my best friend there at Disney, **Jim Steinmeyer,** and he filled in the word balloons. It was so funny, I thought, "This is *great,* what a


OH, WONDERFUL! WE CAN'T EVEN KEEP THE DAMN LOGO CENTERED!
NO ONE'S GONNA WANT TO BUY THIS BOOK!
THE EYE OF MONGOMBO
by Doug Gray
You're a FOOL, Jumballah! You know it won't take me long to find an antidote!
Jumballah think of this! Try to prepare antidote without fingers!
CURSES!
You're still a fool, Jumballah! I can always get someone else to help me!
Jumballah think of that, too!
whoops!
Well, you still have to catch me, Jumballah! I'm no sitting duck!
AAAARGH!!
CHOP
Always you make bad jokes, rotten puns! Soon, you will not make jokes! You will only make loud, piercing screams!!
Says you! I outta my way, Monkshit!
CHANGE
Hey!!

We asked Marcel Chevalier, the famous pantomime artist, to give his interpretation of the EYE OF MONGOMBO (translations provided by Mimes of America)

"thrilling, edge-of-your-seat excitement! Suspence and drama in the Hitchcock tradition!"

"Hilarious comedy... Sophisticated... would not be out of place on a shelf next to Oscar Wilde."

"terrific characters... continues the literacy tradition of Tahrsael, Huck Finn, and... Olaf"

"I think I'm stuck... I can't breathe... help! ... For God's sake, someone please help me!"

an actual scene!

In this adventure/comedy series, anthropology professor and globe-trotting adventurer Cliff Carlson is fired due to his villainous arch-rival Professor Nuskle, and then turned into a duck by an evil witch-doctor. He and his faithful assistants take off on a journey to find the Eye of Mongombo, when they run into two old enemies: Gruber and Kawligal

FANTAGRAPHICS BOOKS

EYE OF MONGOMBO #1, 36 pages, black-and-white comic book. $2.00 ($2.50 in Canada)

Doug Sez:

"I wanted a crude look — I was thinking of Crumb."

way to pass the time!" So, after hours, I would draw up these strips.

I sort of made a promise to myself, no pencilling and all of the strips would be done actual size, because I didn't want this to take any time, and I wanted it to have a very crude, spontaneous look. I was thinking of **Crumb** and the way he works; his stuff has just got this natural grittiness to it, I thought that would be a neat way to work. It was interesting to me because it was the *antithesis* of my slick work, which is primarily what I'm known for. It was very liberating to just sit there and start with a pen, not even pencil anything, draw the panel borders and then think up visual situations without *knowing* what Jim was going to write, just leaving balloons for him in each panel. Then there was the real pleasure of handing the pages over to Jim once they were finished — and of course he didn't know what I was going to draw, so he was surprised each time — and then getting the finished page *back* from Jim and reading it as though someone else had done it; and someone else *had* in a way. That method of working made it so I never got tired of doing the strips, because it was just a constant surprise. It wasn't the grind of doing a daily strip where everything is planned out well ahead.

So, we would Xerox these and pass them around, and they became very popular as office humor within Walt Disney Imagineering, and eventually we had enough for a book! The San Diego Comic Convention was coming up, so I thought, "This is is, I'll print my own book!" *(Laughter.)* So we did a limited edition of 250 copies, we signed and numbered them, sold them within the company and at the San Diego Con, and then I took all of the profits and gave them to the Crippled Children's Society.

DAVID: *That's wonderful. Who is Jim Steinmeyer?*

BILL: Jim Steinmeyer is this great, amazing guy. He is an expert in magic, he's a magic historian, and he also is an expert and historian on stage illustions. He works professionally designing magic tricks for magicians. He is the man who created and designed all of **Doug Henning's** tricks. He created and designed **David Copperfield's** big things, made it possible for **David Copperfield** to make the Statue of Liberty vanish. He did the castle vanishing at Disneyland for one of the DISNEY SUNDAY NIGHT MOVIES. And he designed the big illusions for **Siegfried and Roy** in Las

WHAT
WAS
THAT
!
HEY! WELL, HEAVY, FAR OUT, SPARE CHANGE AND ALL THAT!
WHAT'RE YOU FREAKS DOIN' IN THIS NECK O' THE WOODS?
JA DIG MY LIL' RIFF THERE?
NOW IF I ONLY HAD DE BLOOZ!
CONTINUED IN THIS ISSUE...

Next to "The Raven", Stout's favorite CYCLE-TOONS story was "Hogg in Ozz", in which he took the Hogg Ryder character through a hilarious parody of "The Wizard of Oz", motorcycle style. In Stout's version, the wizard turns out to be none other than Ozzie Nelson. This panel shows "The Lion", from the rock group of the same name. If he only had "De Blooz"!

"Over the years Disneyland has become

Vegas. That's primarily what he does.

DAVID: *I see.*

BILL: What we did together at Disney, **Jim Steinmeyer**, Tony **Marando** and I designed an entire 250,000 sq. ft. entertainment-dining-retail project. The three of us created it, and then I did about 90 percent of the visual designs for the place for the presentation.

DAVID: *Have they accepted it, will that actually be built?*

BILL: *(Laughter.)* Well, we did the presentation, which **Michael Eisner** said was the most spectacular presentation he'd ever seen —

DAVID: *Michael Eisner is the chairman of the Walt Disney Company*

BILL: Yes. We had live dancing girls, we had laser optics, we had music, we had this gigantic model built of the place, it opened up, we had fog machines — it was an all-out presentation. They got real excited about it, and then took us all off the project.

DAVID: *Well, that makes a lot of sense! When was this, when did you make the presentation to Eisner?*

BILL: It was either late '87 or early '88.

DAVID: *Okay. Now, there is a rumor that you sent a copy of MICKEY AT 60 to Eisner.*

BILL: That's true, and he wrote a very nice note back.

DAVID: *In addition to that big project, what else have you been doing for Imagineering?*

BILL: I produced and wrote and designed an entire project for Tokyo Disneyland, for some land they have adjacent to their Magic Kingdom.

DAVID: *What kind of project?*

BILL: Basically the Japanese asked for a Matterhorn, and I gave them something different — something *similar*, but something different. I thought, "Well, *anybody* can just copy a Matterhorn, why don't we do something else that's even better?" So, I came up with something even cooler. And then for Anaheim . . . I've noticed that over the years Disneyland has become less and less a place to take little kids, because there is a *height* requirement for all of the best rides, so little kids can't go on half the things there. They can't go on Star Tours, they can't go on Space Mountain, they can't go on the Matterhorn, they can't go on Big Thunder Railroad. They *used* to be able to go on Big Thunder Railroad *before* it was Big Thunder Railroad, when it was Nature's Wonderland so they can't even see all of *that* neat stuff that they've got there. It's really become a place more for teenagers.

I thought, "Boy, there's a huge untapped market here, it's really a shame that Disney is overlooking this." So I came up with a place for little kids, where parents could take little kids. And I was thinking too of the single parent who doesn't know what to do on the weekend, this would be great for them. I designed a place that could not only be built *in* Disneyland, but I also designed it so it could be modular, something that you could franchise; just as there is a McDonalds in every city, you could put one of these places in every city. It's designed in such a way that it could be controlled so it wouldn't get run-down or vandalzied like just, say public parks, and it would be a nice healthy, wholesome place to take little kids. And as far as I know, they're not doing it.

DAVID: *Do you have much experience in environmental design?*

BILL: I do *now*. *(Laughter.)* It was earn while you learn.

DAVID: *I saw a poster that I think you did for Catastrophe Canyon — what is that?*

BILL: That was a T-shirt design. Catastrophe Canyon is going to be part of the Walt Disney Studio Tour, it's sort of a special effects ride where there's earthquakes and things.

DAVID: *So, this will be in Orlando.*

BILL: Yeah.

DAVID: *How do you get these assignments? Do you ask for them or do you come up with something on your own, or what?*

BILL: Well, that was the nice thing about working at Disney, was — well, actually it's a nice thing and a dangerous thing — there are very few job definitions. I could do pretty much whatever I wanted, which was great. But the problem with *not* having a job definition is then those projects can be taken away from you. You can say you're the producer on a project, then they can say, "No, you're not, that's not your *job title*." *(Laughter.)*

I tried to turn that around to my advantage. I can't remember if I got this from a movie or what, but there was a project that was going off track and I thought if somebody didn't *do* something fast, really take control, it would really sink, so one day I made up a job title for myself, went around the room and *told* everyone that's who I was — and they all believed me! I made myself their boss, just told them I was their boss and they had to do whatever I told them. *(Laughter.)* And the project started to get back on track again. I would just check with them every morning, say, "Well, I

Special Benefit Concert for th
Recorded LIVE at the Foru
Our Story Thus Far:
BROWN SUGAR?
BITCH!
ALL
DOWN
THE
Flight 505 all sold out. See yesterdays papers
Situations Wanted:
Live With Me: 20 children, home for 3, nursery, butler, French maid, cook, chauffeur, footman. Send photo and letter Box 69-2120 S. Michigan Ave.
Snake man wd meet woman w/columbina prob
NO EXPECTATIONS

less and less a place to take little kids."

William Stout's first bootleg record cover was for this Rolling Stones album. "This was a lot of fun," mused Stout. "I was inspired by R. Crumb's 'Cheap Thrills' cover on this one."

"Working at Disney killed my movie career."

Stout looks happy as he poses with some of the cast from RETURN OF THE LIVING DEAD and special surprise set visitor Jason Robards.

think you need to go in this direction," or, "This is fine, this is great." There is that flexibility within that company to do outrageous things like that.

DAVID: *Good heavens. So that's how assignments get done, you just kind of generate them yourself and then figure "Okay, now I'm running this" and get people to work?*

BILL: That's one way. The other thing is word gets out within the company of who's good at doing what. Different producers within the company would call me up and say, "Have you got some time free, I've got this *wonderful* project for you." It would always be a wonderful project, too, it would be something you would just *kill* to do, and they'd just call you up and say, "Would you like to do this?" So you would work on that for awhile. That was great!

DAVID: *What kind of projects would those be?*

BILL: Oh, like the Matterhorn thing.

DAVID: *How often do you get to design your own mountain?*

BILL: Yeah, your *own* mountain — and you can *make* it whatever you want! *(Laughter.)* And there were a few others like that. The sort of self-generated project, the kid's place, without saying what it was, I was basically able to pull in the world of **Carl Barks** as a major influence — use my love of the old **Barks** stories to *design* this place. When you saw it you thought, "I wish it was built *now* so I could go *today!*" You don't get that opportunity at too many places.

DAVID: *This is true. Does working at Disney give you any kind of inside track on making movies?*

BILL: Working at Disney *killed* my movie career. *(Laughter.)* It took me out of circulation for a year and a half, and the film business has a very *short* memory. There was also the problem when the writers' strike came up, since I am a guild member, there was the problem of *not* being able to work even when I wanted to. So, since I left Disney, which was September, I've only been offered one picture. *Usually* about this time I've got seven film offers. It slowed things down.

DAVID: *The film offer that you got, was this for designing?*

BILL: Yes. I did get a directorial offer *while* I was at Disney, **Tobe Hooper** offered me a film to direct.

DAVID: *The guy who directed TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE and —*

BILL: Yeah. I worked with Tobe on INVADERS FROM MARS, and he's one of the nicest guys in the film business, really wonderful. The script was based upon **Ed Gein,** which is why Tobe thought of me. Actually it was a friend and assistant and publicist of Tobe's, **Scott Holton,** who thought of me,

"He killed women — and ate the meat."

because he had seen the **Ed Gein** cover I had done for WEIRD TRIPS. He thought, "Oh, **Bill Stout** would be perfect for this," and Tobe thought, *"Yeah!"* Now, I have no problem with doing an **Ed Gein** movie, but it just turned out that this wasn't the one I wanted to do.

DAVID: *Now, Ed Gein, was he Leatherface in TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE?*

BILL: Actually, Ed Gein was all three of those guys, Tobe sort of split **Ed Gein** up into three people for TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE, and he was Norman in PSYCHO. But the *real* story is even more bizarre than those movies, and I think that would be really fascinating to do.

DAVID: *What was the real story?*

BILL: He lived in Wisconsin, and he was sort of a handyman as I recall, did odd jobs and stuff — and he had this real *bizarre* mother fixation. I believe after his mother died was when he really went over the bend. He started dressing in her clothes. Then he would go to the cemetery and would dig up women's corpses, then would skin them and wear the skins around the house. He made furniture out of their bodies, he had sofa and chairs and lamp shades and all kinds of stuff. Then he began to waylay travelers through town, or hitchhikers or

"The rejection of this cover for the second dinosaur-themed Time Machine book really put the cap on my relation with that series," mused Stout. "The people involved with this at Bantam complained that they couldn't tell this was a dinosaur!"

"He found his own mother's heart cooking on the stove."

"If ever there was a film that looked as though I directed it, it's THE HITCHER," remarked Stout. "The director of that film and I share the same style of storytelling and an identical sense of composition." Shown here are a few of Stout's boards for the film.

drifters, mostly young women. He would kill them and then basically he would dress them like beef. He had a smoking shed where he would hang them up and cure them, and then he ate the meat.

DAVID: *Not your normal guy.*

BILL: And no one in town suspected that old Gentle Ed the handyman was doing all of this stuff. Then he made the mistake of shooting the sheriff's mother in her store, and after he shot her he took her back to his house, prepared her for smoking, and then went over to someone's house to play cards. The sheriff went into his mom's store, saw a pool of blood on the floor, and he noticed that a receipt had been made out to **Ed Gein.** He went out to Ed's place with some deputies, and the first thing he found was his own mother's heart cooking on the stove. Of course he didn't know it was his mother's heart, but then he went out to the shed and found his mother hanging upside down, split open, waiting to be smoked. So he went and found Ed.

DAVID: *Lordy.*

BILL: What a strange, strange person.

DAVID: *That is some story, and it hasn't been done well in movies —*

BILL: It's been done well, it just hasn't been done accurately.

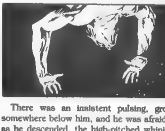
DAVID: *Yeah.*

BILL: I love CHAINSAW, I love PSYCHO, and *both* of those films have the key to making such a grotesque subject palatable to the public, and that is *humor.* It's *crucial* to have some sort of *relief* from the unrelenting ghoulishness of this guy, and I think humor is the key.

DAVID: *Well, what else have you got going these days?*

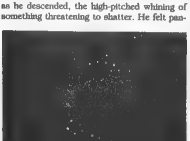
BILL: Well, since I left Disney I've been working on the comic stories, and . . . There are all these companies that have been formed by people who *used* to work for Walt Disney Imagineering, doing what Walt Disney Imagineering does — in fact Walt Disney Imagineering sometimes *hires* these companies, subcontracts to them. As soon as I left I found out about these companies, because they all started calling me. So I've been doing some work for them designing Japanese theme parks. The Japanese looked at the *success* of the Tokyo Disneyland and decided, as they do with many products,

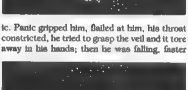
©1989 Harlan Ellison



There was an insistent pulsing, growing somewhere below him, and he was afraid of it as he descended, the high-pitched whining of something threatening to shatter. He felt pan-

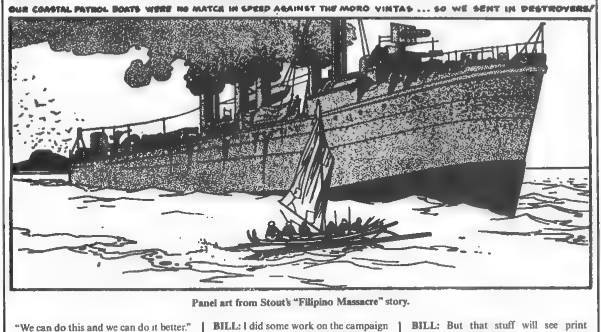
ic. Panic gripped him, flailed at him, his throat constricted, he tried to grasp the veil and it tore away in his hands; then he was falling, faster





Another important piece by Stout was his graphic adaptation of Harlan Ellison's "Shattered Like A Glass Goblin". It orginally appeared in HEAVY METAL, and was the first issue of that magazine to sell completely out.

"I did one piece Spielberg really loved, but no one else did."



Panel art from Stout's "Filipino Massacre" story.

"We can do this and we can do it better." There are at least *five* Disneyland type projects being built in Japan right now, so there's lots of work out there.

DAVID: *You're designing rides and attractions and so on?*

BILL: Yes. I'm also involved in a large Lucasfilm project in Memphis, Tennessee, working again with **Tim Onosko.**

DAVID: *Are you doing any new movie posters or production design?*

BILL: I did some work on the campaign for LAND BEFORE TIME, ironically enough. *(Laughter.)*

DAVID: *What did you do for them?*

BILL: I did about a dozen pen-and-ink and watercolor pieces for the promotion of the film, none of which I've seen in use yet. I did one big piece that **Spielberg** really loved, but apparently no one else did.

DAVID: *Too bad.*

BILL: But that stuff will see print someday.

DAVID: *Now, as an artist and as a film person and as a dinosaur buff, what did you think of LAND BEFORE TIME?*

BILL: It was beautiful visually. The story wasn't what I had hoped for, the characters weren't what I had hoped for. Actually, visually, I was *surprised* that they set the story in such a dismal, desolate landscape. It looked like one of

MICKEY at 60
by Stout & Steinmeyer
THERE'S GOT TO BE SOMETHING ON BESIDES "WHEEL OF FORTUNE..."
HUH? WOODY WOODPECKER ON "LIFESTYLES OF THE RICH & FAMOUS"?
THAT DANG BIRD! MY OPINION OF ROBIN LEACH JUST DROPPED A NOTCH.
MICKEY at 60
by Stout & Steinmeyer
...AND THAT'S WHY I ALWAYS THOUGHT POPEYE WAS A COMMIE...
OOPS! CAN'T BELIEVE I DID THAT AGAIN.
HEH, BUST BEYMOORE NEEDS A RUB, TOO. I PAID MORE FOR MINE!

"MICKEY AT 60 was not *really* about Mickey Mouse. It was more about all the old one-time-big Hollywood actors I'd ever met or had seen interviewed on television," explained Stout. "A lot of people think he's Gleason. I ain't tellin'."

"I've always wanted to write a cowboy movie."

From the sketchbook of William Stout.

those post nuclear holocaust places where everything was craggy and rocky and hot and steaming volcanoes. I would have liked to have seen more variety, more like what they had in FANTASIA, with some swamps and lush jungles and things like that. Probably if I see it again I'll see that they had all of that stuff in it, but my *memory* is mostly that it was harsh, rocky landscapes.

DAVID: *Well, your answering machine mentioned that you're working on a new screenplay. What is that about?*

BILL: It's a cowboy movie. I've always wanted to write a cowboy movie. It's very gritty and realistic, which hasn't been done *too* often. **Robert Benton** did a great job with BAD COMPANY. So, I've done a lot of research into those times. And basically what I want to do was done just recently with LONESOME DOVE. It wasn't *real* gritty and realistic, but the personalities, the sort of rampant sociopaths that existed during that time, were very realistic — and the dialogue was just the kind of dialogue I want to write in this screenplay. I've always been a fan of Westerns.

DAVID: *That's surprising. I've never seen anything like that in your work at all.*

BILL: Yeah, I've never had the chance to do that.

DAVID: *Now, are you doing this on your own initiative or did somebody put you up to it?*

BILL: As soon as I left Disney I started the screenplay because it's just something I've been dying to do.

DAVID: *Well, the inevitable last question, why have you sometimes spelled your name "Bil"?*

BILL: Oh, that started when I was working at Disneyland. I put myself through art school by working at Disneyland during the summer, doing watercolor portraits, and we were paid on commission. The more portraits I did, the more money I made, and I found if I dropped the second L on my name — since we only signed them with our first names — that I could do one extra portrait per day. It sounds crass, but those buck-and-a-halves added up. *(Laughter.)* And around that time ELECTRIC LADYLAND by **Jimi Hendrix** came out, and inside in his dedications or thanks there was someone named Bil, and I thought, "Oh, that's cool." So I hung onto that for awhile. I don't use it very much lately, since I haven't done too many watercolor portraits lately. *(Laughter.)*

"Byron (Preiss), like myself, was once a teacher."

HOWARD ZIMMERMAN

Howard Zimmerman is probably most well known as the former editor of STARLOG, the creator of COMICS SCENE, which he also edited, and various other magazines. Despite the fact that we share the same last name, we are not related and, until about a year and a half ago, had not met. I consider that to be my loss, which was enjoyably corrected when I received a phone call from him asking about a couple of stories I was supposed to for the Bank Street Collections series for Byron Preiss Visuals Publications — an ambitious undertaking, as you'll quickly discover. It was also a project that had more than its share of growing pains and, at one point, I thought it was completely dead.

That's when Howard called, told me that he was the new editor, and not only was the project on, but he needed the stories assigned to me immediately! *Not only did I discover Howard to be an articulate, intelligent and savvy editor, I found out that he was a guy you could trust — to treat you fairly and to get things done. Not only that, but I found him to be a pretty nice guy. Sounds too good to be true? I don't think so. And I can't wait for the chance to work with him again . . .*

DWIGHT ZIMMERMAN: *How did this series get started?*

HOWARD ZIMMERMAN: Byron Preiss, the producer of the books and the man for whom I am editing, has historically produced graphically-illustrated material. Byron was one of the very first producers to come out with a concept that approaches the graphic novel. And in fact he and **Steranko** put out graphic novels years ago. Byron, like myself, was once a teacher, a public school teacher And he had always wanted to do comics for kids that could be used in a classroom situation — or outside of a classroom — but that added to a child's understanding, sense of wonder, painless information and a way to excite kids to read. When I was in the classroom I taught reading through comics and as it turned out, Byron did the same.

DWIGHT: *Which comics did you use?*

HOWARD: At that point, I was using Marvel comics. I had friends at Marvel. I

THE GREAT MAN WAS A PIANO VIRTUOSO. HIS SKILL AT PLAYING THE CLASSICS WAS SECOND TO NONE. AT LEAST, SO HE THOUGHT... UNTIL HE BOUGHT ROLLO, A ROBOTIC SERVANT.
SIR?
YES, ROLLO?
SIR, I WAS WONDERING IF YOU WOULD EXPLAIN THIS MECHANISM TO ME.

Page from "Virtuoso" by Herbert Goldstone (story adapted by Dwight Zimmerman, artwork by Alex Nino).

All material accompanying this interview © 1989 Bank Street Comics, unless otherwise noted.

"Two of the top talents we have in here, Rick Geary and

I DON'T UNDERSTAND IT, FRED MAN... HOW COULD I HAVE DONE SUCH A TERRIBLE THING?
FEAR, MATT. A SIMPLE AND POWERFUL FEAR OF UNKNOWN PLACES AND THINGS. IT'S CALLED XENOPHOBIA.
FPO
THAT I KNOW. IT STARTED WHEN YOU CAME BACK FROM MARS... THE FIRST MOMENT I SAW THAT THING...

Page from "The Tweener" by Leigh Brackett (story adaptation: Don Kraar, Artwork: John Pierard).

remember one instance getting an advance copy of a SPIDER-MAN comic — statted pages — that I could xerox up enough copies for a whole class. The word balloons were not on the page. The script was not there. And we would discuss the art and the potential story and the kids' assignment was to script it. It's a lot easier to do that today with computers. But when I was doing it, computers weren't available. It's an exciting way for a hands-on activity.

What we've done in the Bank Street Collections is to include at the beginning and the end of every story a text page. We have background material on the authors being adapted and questions at the end of each story that are hopefully thought-provoking — a way to get the kid to have the experience by his or herself. They don't necessarily need someone else to go with them through the story. And we're hoping that the questions at the end will stimulate thought about the themes in the story. And become a real learning experience, although the kids certainly won't see it that way.

DWIGHT: *How did the whole project get started?*

HOWARD: The genesis really was Byron's desire to do some graphically-illustrated books. I was one of the first people he contacted in terms of getting involved. This was four years ago. I was at that point editing STARLOG magazine. The project was on and off, on and off. After I left STARLOG I got in touch with Byron and the project was on again. He immediately asked if I wanted to be involved. And I jumped. A great opportunity.

DWIGHT: *Steve Ringgenberg was the first editor for these books. He asked me to adapt a couple of stories. What floored me was the incredible logistics of the project. It wasn't just one book, it was a series of anthologies. To contact all the literary agents and writers, get the rights, and then get the writers and artists and letterers to do the adapting . . .*

HOWARD: There are approximately fifty-five stories, approximately six-hundred-and-fifty pages of story and art. Of the fifty-five stories, maybe a dozen or so are public domain -- which means that forty-odd stories had to be tracked down as to who had the rights! Contracts had to be negotiated with whoever had the rights to that particular story; then contracts had to be drawn and signed for each artist doing each story, each scripter doing each story. There are some two hundred contracts involved — a logistical nightmare! Plus, I had three masters: Byron is my immediate boss and guiding light with the project, but we were producing it for the Bank Street College of Education, and the series is being published by Simon and Schuster. So it had to pass Byron's approval, then Bank Street's approval, then Simon and Schuster's approval, and again that was a logistical nightmare for each of the stories.

Then there were the stories that we went into production with hoping that we would get the rights and unfortunately, in about half of those cases, we could not get the rights.

The editors at Bank Street and I looked at maybe two hundred and fifty stories — and possibly more before I came on to the project — in order to winnow through and narrow down to get to the ones that would really serve the purpose. And that's why it was so long in the making!

DWIGHT: *With all of those problems, how did you get good talent and stories?*

HOWARD: Some of it was luck, some of it was hard work, and some of it was networking. Two of the top talents we have in here, **Rick Geary** and **Alex Nino**, both had worked for Byron on other projects. So entree to them was quite easy. Also, conveniently enough, Rick had just moved to New York from California, which made it even easier — because now he lives in the neighborhood. Getting in touch with **Alex Nino**

Alex Nino, both had worked for Byron on other projects."

was not an easy job, but he did some excellent work for us. Through one of my scripters, **Fred Schiller,** I hooked up with **Evan Dorkin,** who is an underground cartoonist and who does PIRATE CORPS. Through Evan and Fred I found a couple of very talented young men who at that point were still students at the School of Visual Arts. And at that point I hooked up with enough people for word to get out and people started calling me. Unfortunately, the rates we had to pay people were not outstanding. And several people worked on the series with a twofold purpose — one, to get exposure because their careers were starting, and two, because they were really juiced on the idea of working on comics specifically to be used in an educational setting. Plus, it was the opportunity for a lot of people to adapt the works of authors whose works they've read and really liked. Everyone wanted to do the **Anne McCaffrey** story. *(Laughter.)*

DWIGHT: *Who was the lucky crew?*

HOWARD: People from the New Comics Group, who I was put in contact with by **Fred Schiller — Vai Jones** out in California and her people. They were quite familiar with **McCaffrey's** mythos, which was extremely important. Anne's contract was unique in the series. She was the only one given right of approval over the scripting and art. That meant communicating back and forth to Ireland. But it was worthwhile. And Anne was quite pleased with what we came up with. She had very specific images in her mind of what Darkhold looks like and various characters. The dragons and various aspects of the book. She asked for very few changes and we were pleased that we stayed so closely to her concept.

Other authors whose works were adapted for the fantasy volume are **Terry and Carol Carr, John Wyndham, Gael Baudino,** a classic story by **C.J. Cutcliff-Hyne** called "The Lizard." For the science fiction book, of course, **Isaac Asimov, Andre Norton's** story, "Teddy," **Brian Aldis, Mack Reynolds, Leigh Brackett, Damon Knight, H.G. Wells'** story "The Abyss," **Keith Laumer,** a **Clifford Simak** story. As you can see, a lot of heavy-hitters. For the mystery volume one of the authors whose works we adapted is **Fredric Brown** — his "The Dangerous People" was not only a short story but also an **Alfred Hitchcock** episode on television. The art is by **Russ Steffens** who did work in the 1970s for Marvel and DC. We have an **Asimov** story, because **Asimov** wrote a lot of

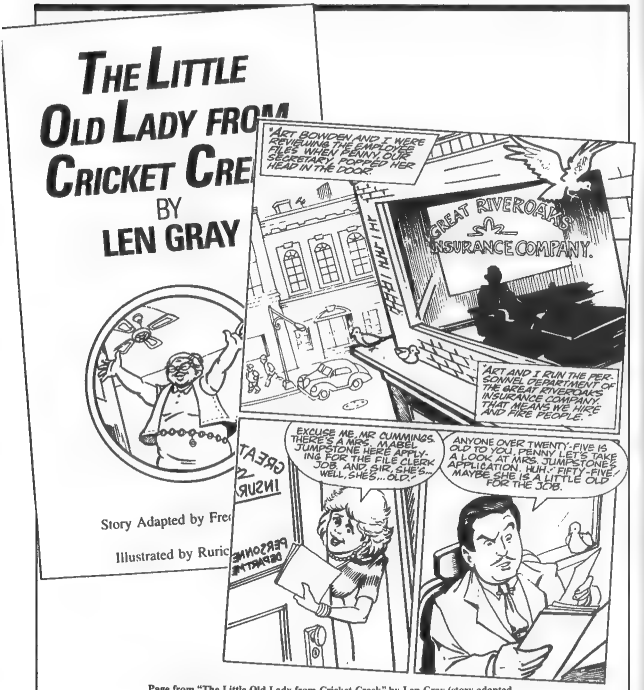
Page from "The Disappearing Man" by Isaac Asimov (story adapted and illustrated by Rick Geary).

mystery stories. A story by **Richard Laymon,** a story by **Bret Harte** called "The Stolen Cigar Case," which is a Sherlock Holmes satire. The art on that was done by **Bob Versandi,** who drew ARCHIE for about ten years. We have an **Edgar Allan Poe** story, "The Oblong Box." A **David Morrell** story, "Let the Good Times Begin." If his name sounds familiar, it's because he wrote FIRST BLOOD and FIRST BLOOD, PART II, etc.

CREEPY TALES was our compromise — it was felt the term horror might be a detriment in certain parts of the country, so we are calling the horror volume CREEPY TALES. However, the skeleton and the haunted house on the cover tells you right off the bat what it's all about. Here we have "The Telltale Heart," an **Edgar Allan Poe** story illustrated by **Rick Geary,** a super piece! There's also an **H.G. Wells** story, "The Country of the Blind." **Jack London** and works of a number of other less famous authors. All the stories are solid. In each case they had to pass muster because there were so many levels of approval.

This is the first time that Bank Street has aligned themselves with a comics product. They were initially leery. They have a tremendous reputation in the country in terms of educational product. They tend to be kind of conservative.

"I feel that everything that could go wrong — has!"


THE LITTLE OLD LADY FROM CRICKET CRE
BY
LEN GRAY
Story Adapted by Fre
Illustrated by Ruric
"ART BOWDEN AND I WERE REVIEWING THE EMPLOYEE FILES WHEN PENNY, OUR SECRETARY POPPED HER HEAD IN THE DOOR."
GREAT RIVER OAKS INSURANCE COMPANY.
"ART AND I RUN THE PERSONNEL DEPARTMENT OF THE GREAT RIVER OAKS INSURANCE COMPANY. THAT MEANS WE HIRE AND FIRE PEOPLE."
EXCUSE ME, MR CUMMINGS. THERE'S A MRS. MABEL JUMPSTONE HERE APPLYING FOR THE FILE CLERK JOB, AND, SIR, SHE'S... WELL, SHE'S... OLD."
ANYONE OVER TWENTY-FIVE IS OLD TO YOU, PENNY. LET'S TAKE A LOOK AT MRS. JUMPSTONE'S APPLICATION. HUH.' FIFTY-FIVE. MAYBE SHE IS A LITTLE OLD FOR THE JOB.
INSURANCE
PERSONNEL DEPARTMENT

Page from "The Little Old Lady from Cricket Creek" by Len Gray (story adapted by Fred Schiller, illustrated by Rurick Tyler).

Byron was able to explain to them the advantages of doing this. And they have put themselves in the forefront of the movement to teach with more graphic material by co-sponsoring these books.

DWIGHT: *After all that you've gone through, do you want to do more?*

HOWARD: Funny you should ask! Doing these — I feel that everything that could go wrong, *has* gone wrong! *(Laughter.)* So even though it was not pleasant at times and did take a year and a half to pull it all together, I've now learned how to do this. I've learned what the pitfalls are. And if the readers, and God, are willing and this sells well, I'd jump at the chance at doing a second set. I've always liked working with creative people. I had a chance to work with a lot of young artists and that really juices me. I had a chance to meet people like yourself, local talent whom I had never run into. And I enjoy the creative give and take that's involved in this, as well as the challenge. I'd definitely do more. In fact, I wish I'd had this kind of material when I was teaching school!

LAST WORD

Comics Interview 234 Fifth Ave. Suite 301 New York, NY 10001

ALWAYS AN OPEN FORUM

Dave;

I normally don't see COMICS INTERVIEW, but issue #71 was given to me by someone up at DC. I have no idea why you printed the letter/tirade from **Burt Bolen** because I'm not certain it relates to anything that had seen print in COMICS INTERVIEW.

Bolen's letter is bizarre because A: he attacks me for blackballing his letters from the TITANS letters page when I haven't *written* a TITANS letter page in almost four years, and don't always see all the mail. If **Bolen** sent me letters or letters to the TITANS I may have read them but that was about all. Nobody, not **Mike Gold** or **Barbara Kesel** who wrote the pages would not print letters of controversy because those are the kinds of letters that make for interesting reading.

If **Bolen's** letters weren't printed it may be because they were as poorly thought out as his diatribe here.

We have *never* ignored the old Titans. If he read the book with any regularity he would know that. In fact many of the old characters have appeared in the last year. We even had an entire issue devoted to the old Titans with none of the new members present.

Bolen also says he desperately wants Harlequin back even if we have to change everything about her. That makes *no* sense. If a character has to be completely revamped to be brought back, it isn't the same character. Why not just create another character? In the case of the Harlequin, we have mentioned her. She has not been ignored, and should George, Tom or I have an idea that might make the character work, we'd try it, but to date we haven't.

Bolen's letters might also not have been published if he made dumb attacks like **Bob Rozakis** was threatened by the DC Brass and silenced because he wanted to bring back the old Titans. Nobody ever did that. Bob was made head of DC's Production Department, hardly a position anyone would be given if threatened. **Bolen's** remark is not thought out and plainly untrue. DC Brass (whoever they may be) does not threaten writers like that over such insignificant issues as one minor character from a book.

Mr. Bolen, as I said, I have not seen your letters. If they were intelligently written instead of insultingly written, it's possible the people who did write the letter columns might have printed them.

Lastly, I have no idea why this letter was printed here. Was there some interview with somebody on the old Titans?

Marv Wolfman
(Address withheld)

COMICS INTERVIEW is the voice of comics . . . where professionals can express their views free of editorial bias, and where fans, too, are offered an open forum to express views that might not otherwise see print. That's why we printed Burt's letter — and why we're printing yours, Marv. By the way, good to hear from you again!

— DAK

AN OPEN LETTER TO MARVEL AND DC

I have been trying for years to get someone at Marvel and DC to look at my work. I hope to break in as a scripter. What luck have I had? I've been ignored to the extent that I don't even receive a rejection. It's not as if they've responded to the point of their own exhaustion and now ignore me. They have yet to reply once.

If their explanation is: "You must include return postage to receive a reply," then they're without an excuse. I do. Or, if they don't open submissions for fear of plagiarism charges, I follow the techniques required for television queries where the envelope states what is inside (e.g., Query, Solicited Script, Unsolicited Plot, etc.).

Other comic companies do respond, some even sending writer's guidelines and personal responses.

I've been published in RPG game supplements and magazines galore, as well as ghostwriting for television; it's not as if I'm an amateur. Others have made this same jump from gaming to comics: **Bill Willingham, Jeff Grubb, Rich Buckler, Jeff Dee** to name a few. So why am I met with closed doors?

I've refrained from telephoning their offices. It's standard in publishing industries to not call unless requested or utterly frustrated. Is it the same in comicbook land?

I'm in this trap that's impossible to escape. Sending more letters will do nothing new, I'm sure of it. Phoning them will soon make an enemy of me. Moreover, forcing them to receive a registered letter or special delivery letter will do the same.

There's another popular excuse: "If we responded to every submission and query, we'd never get our work done." Does this mean that they haven't found any new writers and artists in the past decade? Does this mean everyone *not* in their segment of the publishing industry is not as good as their talent?

When you ask comic creators how to break into the industry they return, "Don't try. It's too hard." So how did they get in? Especially considering some of their dubious talents; ranging from reality-warped illustrations to bloated, pre-school dialog and idiotic plots?

So, somewhere — somehow — they should state their policy for new submissions. It wouldn't be that hard to say: "We don't accept anything in the way of submissions," and then make exceptions where it was merited. Instead, they say, "We're looking for new talent," and follow that up by ignoring submissions. In the WRITER'S MARKET published every year, an entry for Marvel says they do accept submissions. Which is the truth: print or reality?

Look to the companies and titles that have been turning heads for a while. With the exception of DC's two big heroes and their mass media blitz, it's the independents. I can see companies — especially the two biggest — trying to break from the pack, but why do they strive to be close-minded, outdated and mediocre in comparison to the competition?

In closing, I issue a challenge to Marvel and DC Comics, one I believe they'll ignore: read my submissions and on their merit, reply as you would to anyone else.

I don't expect a reply.

Michael DeWolfe
4088 Quadra St.
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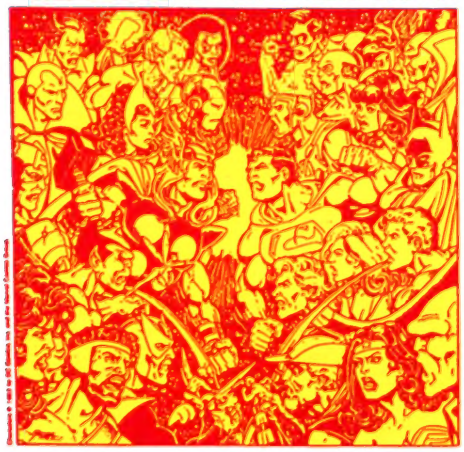

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